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CHINESE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

by

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To the Memory of My Mother

who possessed the highest virtues of East and West, and of whom this comparative Study is far from worthy.

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

It is fitting that a series of Political Science Classics should be inaugurated with a volume on Chinese political philosophy. The oriental sages, as the present essay makes abundantly clear, never produced an ordered system of thought. There was not the continuity, nor the logic, nor the criticism which are inseparable from philosophical categories; "political philosophy," indeed, is perhaps too concrete a term to be applied to their speculations. But in point of time the maxims of the Orient antedated the political theories of the Western world and, although Hellenic political philosophy was the first ordered system of thought, the oriental world was at least familiar with ordered political life. As has been the case with so many modern philosophers, it was the observation of the deficiencies and the injustices of the contemporary rulers that in part led Confucius to state his principles for the betterment of the relations between state and individual.

His philosophy was simple but at the same time it was complex. Ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, older brothers and younger—rule by the first and submission by the latter: this was his injunction. Governance should be in righteousness and benevolence; submission in righteousness and sincerity; the promotion of virtue should be the aim of friends. The disregard of these principles caused the anarchy in which the state found itself. The

power of example and the inherent goodness of human nature were adequate to effect an improvement.

Mencius built on this Confucian doctrine. Both believed that government was an Heaven-sent institution, but Mencius qualified this by maintaining that "divine right" should be allowed a sovereign only if he were exercising his rule for the good of the people. To a greater degree than Confucius he went into details of what constituted this good. Royal pleasures, taxes, game laws, irrigation, free trade, the right of subsistence, education—he held definite views on these matters and thought that if a ruler would follow his instructions a good government would be possible. Chinese political philosophers, unlike some of their successors in the Western world, were not concerned with drawing up ideal constitutions; they wanted to be the advisors of princes and have their precepts put into practice.

To the task of interpreting Chinese political philosophy to the Western world Mr. Pott brings quite exceptional qualifications. As a child he learned Chinese from his mother who, as his note of dedication suggests, put heredity on his side in writing this book. He was instructor in Philosophy at St. John's University, Shanghai, from 1913 to 1916 and was Professor of Philosophy there from 1919 to 1922. Since 1922 he has been Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Virginia.

L. R.

PREFACE

This little book lays no claim to being a thorough or even an adequate study of Chinese political thought. It is nothing more than a modest effort to suggest a point of view which is both familiar and simple: sound logical procedure requires that in analogical reasoning we should note significant differences as well as striking resemblances lest the latter influence us unduly in the formation of our conclusions.

This small volume is simply the expression of the belief that the West will always be better prepared to understand the East in the field of political thought or in any of the other branches of civilization when it observes the injunction of the Delphic Oracle to know itself better.

In studies which compare one's own culture with that of another land, it chances all too frequently that misleading analogies, which lead to a falsification of perspective, are due as often to insufficient analysis of one's own culture as to lack of intimate acquaintance with the foreign culture in question.

Accordingly, if it appears in the following pages that too much account is taken of differences and not enough of resemblances, and that too much space is given to the debt which the West owes to the Greeks, my only excuse is the conviction that, at the present time, such apparent one-sidedness is needed to redress a balance.

I wish to acknowledge the kindness of the Open Court

Company and of the Oxford University Press in permitting respectively the use of Carus' translation of the Tao Teh King and of Legge's translation of the Four Books in Part Two.

Finally, my thanks are due to all who have gone before. In attempting to set forth the point of view indicated above, I have been aided by the counsel and encouragement of my colleagues in the School of Philosophy of the University of Virginia. I feel under a singular obligation to Professor Albert G. A. Balz whose interest and support has been of such great value as to prompt this special mention of my deep appreciation.

University of Virginia
May 1, 1925.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is plain that the varied and steadily increasing discussion of China in books, periodicals, and the daily newspapers attests an increased interest in the Far East and, more particulary, in the oldest, the largest, and potentially the most powerful country of the Far East. By reason of the wealth of the country, the size of its population, and the many admirable qualities of its people, as well as the frantic and as yet unsuccessful efforts it is making in the direction of self-government, China has become the cynosure of all eyes. Of all the factors that have worked recently to attract the notice of the Western World to China and draw her into the forum of discussion, none has had such far-reaching consequences as the Treaty of Versailles and the Washington Conference. In a very real sense China is no longer a problem in the "back yard" of international politics.

The growing interest in things Chinese, in her commercial opportunities, her art, her poetry, and her politics, is destined, I believe, to arouse a wider interest than has hitherto existed in the West in her philosophy. If philosophy be the guide of life—and nowhere has philosophy aspired to play this high rôle more persistently than in China—a familiarity with the character and purposes of Chinese philosophy in its more general aspects must be indispensable

for an appreciation of Chinese civilization and an intelligent understanding of China as a political problem.

It is to be feared that in the West the economic and political questions, national and international, relating to China, will be envisaged in too narrow and abstract a fashion, and that when thus envisaged, they will exhaust for many minds the entire so-called problem of the Far East. This would be a misfortune, to say the least. And yet it can scarcely be denied that already there is a dismaying tendency in some quarters to such one-sidedness. It would hardly seem necessary to dwell on the mischievous consequences of such an error. Suffice it to say that what we may, for want of a better term, call cultural questions, which appear so much less pressing in the exigencies of practical relationships, are in danger of being either obscured or reserved almost exclusively for collectors, dilettantes and leisured Orientalists. In reality it is just these cultural questions growing out of remote historical circumstances that are provoking the economic, social, and political questions of the present—in short, generating the entire so-called problem.

A great statesman has affirmed that whoever understood China politically, economically, religiously, and socially would hold the keys to the Pacific for the next five hundred years.[1] Whether or not such a political forecast be accurate, it may yet be maintained that an attempt to comprehend certain aspects of Chinese civilization would be highly desirable. An interest in China that is tempered by a measure of insight, of which there is as yet but little, as well as by cordiality, of which there is already a great deal, would lead to a better understanding between China and the West to the mutual benefit of each. It is with such an

[1] John Hay. See Thayer's *Life of John Hay.*

end in view that this modest volume on Chinese political philosophy is undertaken. No claim to either thoroughness or originality can be made. I have tried to assemble a few of the more striking passages relating to politics and government that are to be found in the sayings of Confucius and his chief disciple, Mencius; in the Doctrine of the Mean and in the Great Learning; and in the Tao Teh King or Canon of Reason and Virtue which is ascribed to the philosopher Lao Tzu. I have selected those passages which seem to me to be most typical of the peculiarity of Chinese political thought and most illustrative of the main principles on which that thought turns. In doing so I have borrowed from a Chinese edition of the translation of Dr. James Legge in the case of the writings in the Confucian tradition and from the translation of Dr. Paul Carus in the case of the Canon of Reason and Virtue. It is feared that the introduction to these scattered passages may seem to lack at times a sufficiently direct bearing upon the text. If such be the case, extenuation for this fault may perhaps, with propriety, be claimed. What we call Chinese political philosophy is in the form of more or less disconnected sayings that are worked into no well-rounded philosophical synthesis such as we find in the systems of Western political philosophers. Thus the task of the would-be interpreter is to articulate the thought embodied in these sayings by trying to paint in a background against which they may be seen in clearer relief; or, to change the figure, he must play the humble part of setting the stage for the benefit of those who might possibly be interested in the programme that is to follow. And when one has the temerity to attempt such a *mise en scène* within a small compass, the difficulty of the task is of course greatly enhanced.

It has been remarked that "while the Confucians developed valuable ethical conceptions and founded upon them social institutions and conventions that have been of importance in actual political life, no distinct theories were produced. Short sentences and aphoristic sayings upon matters political occur in early writings on the East, and some of them, as, for example, a number of the reputed writings of Mencius, the disciple of Confucius, are surprisingly liberal." [2] This is a true characterization of the form of Chinese political thought. But when we are told that "confused as these sayings are with religious and ethical dicta and wholly unrelated to any general principles that have been previously established, they can scarcely be of value to the historian of political philosophies," [3] we feel that the estimate becomes a too sweeping indictment. "General principles that have been previously established" can perhaps be shown to underlie Chinese political thought; and to uncover a few of these leading principles by showing the relation they bear to Chinese civilization would seem to be the most satisfactory way of introducing the Western reader to the texts themselves. To be sure, there has been in China no continuous growth of "systems" of political philosophy. But if politics in the last analysis be, as Dewey says, "the intelligent management of social affairs" there has been in China much thought on this subject and, therefore, on political philosophy.

The inclusion of selections from Lao Tzu with those from the Confucian canon calls for a word of explanation. Lao Tzu and Confucius are usually regarded as philosophical opponents and it is customary to contrast their thought as inherently antagonistic. It may therefore occasion some

[2] Willoughby, *Political Theories of the Ancient World*, pp. 16–17.
[3] Ibid.

surprise to those who have even a slight acquaintance with Chinese philosophy, that the sayings of these rivals should be made to keep company in a joint representation of Chinese political philosophy. No doubt these two philosophical worthies would, if consulted, strenuously resist any attempt to force them into a philosophical partnership. But despite the divergencies in temper and thought between Lao Tzu and Confucius, there are certain fundamental resemblances between them; and this I hope to make more clear in that portion of the text bearing upon the extracts from the Tao Teh King.

Finally, in undertaking to present to Western readers an account of the nature of Chinese political thought, I am mindful of the fact that the outsider is constantly beset by the danger of producing "a mummied specimen of human thought and aspiration preserved for all time in the wrappings of erudition." These are words which Tagore uses to denounce all attempts of Occidentals to interpret the East. But I will be bold enough to take such a risk with only the hope that the small specimens I offer will not be utterly devoid of life.

CHAPTER II

THE MENTALITY OF CONFUCIAN CHINA

In considering an alien culture we must at once inquire: What are the things that the people of that culture ultimately value and esteem? What sort of society does the culture count most desirable for achieving ends deemed most appropriate to human nature as it conceives human nature? What is the dominant tradition, or what are the dominant traditions, that determine its judgments upon these matters? What are the sentiments, dispositions and attitudes that have in the course of time become organized on a wide scale into a skeletal texture, so to speak, that might be called its mental outlook or its mentality? All this may seem very vague and general, but it is difficult to be more specific. We may, however, illustrate.

An expert intellectual anatomist might dissect us, we have been told, and "find Platonic and Aristotelian tissues, organs from St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, Locke and Descartes, in the make-up of the ideas by which we are habitually swayed, and find indeed that other thinkers of whose names we may never have heard constitute a larger part of our mental structure than does the Calvin or Kant, Darwin or Spencer, Hegel or Emerson, Bergson or Browning to whom we yield conscious allegiance." [1] Through multitudes of non-reflective channels, general ideas infiltrate into

[1] John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, p.10.

our habits of imagination and behavior, mould our minds and furnish them with a bent that powerfully determines the direction of our future reflective activity. This habitual bent of mind of a people, this spiritual posture, is what we mean by its mentality. And it is obvious that if the mentality of a people is thus distilled from what seems a dead or distant past, some knowledge of that people's history and traditions must condition our appreciation of the distillate. If, now, we could substitute for the Platonic, Aristotelian and other tissues mentioned in the above quotation, certain tissues which we shall call Confucian, we would have in effect the mentality, if not of China, at least of the educated classes or literati by whom China was, until recent years, governed.

There are material differences between the several nations of the West, and yet there is withal a spiritual affinity between them, because their separate cultures have common roots in the history of Europe from the time of the Greeks. Despite all the apparent diversity, therefore, there is such a thing as the "unity of Western civilization." A common heritage, facility of communication, knowledge of one another's language, a common religion—these and many other forces conspire to knit together the contributions of the various portions of the West into something like a unified whole despite the manifold centrifugal forces that tend in the opposite direction toward differentiation and even disruption. But in the case of a great Oriental country like China, which has developed a civilization in complete independence of Western influences, which has maintained this civilization in splendid isolation for more than three thousand years, and whose language and script show no similarity to anything in the West, it is not a matter for surprise to find a mentality differing profoundly from the mental-

ity of the West. Our task is therefore to disclose, at least partially, the mentality of the Chinese people by suggesting how it has been moulded by the Confucian tradition, and to contrast this mentality with the mentality of the West.

East and West are obviously different and the recognition of the fact that a profound difference exists must be the beginning of mutual understanding. That the twain shall never meet is a sentiment that is more poetically appealing than psychologically sound. The events of our day are already belying the poet's prophecy. But if they are to meet in any intimate and fruitful fashion, it must be on the plane of understanding, and, as we have said, on an understanding predicated upon a prior recognition of differences. The merits and duration of the differences are other matters.

In contrast with the view that magnifies unduly the differences between East and West, there is an equally widespread view that ignores or suppresses significant divergences and thereby greatly over-simplifies the East-West problem. According to this second view, the chief difference seems to be a religious difference. The West is just Christian and the East just heathen, and more specifically China or its upper class is just Confucian. But the religion of the West will eventually win all China. Religious allegiances have changed, nay, are changing, and so there is the comfortable assurance that somehow or other East and West must come together completely in the end. To put the case in this way is of course to fail to see the complexities of the problem of the spiritual *rapprochement* between Occident and Orient and to substitute for analysis unwitting but none the less crude caricature. Indeed it may truthfully be said that Christian China awaits a Chinese St. Paul.

Whether or no Confucianism may properly be called a religion is something over which opinion is divided. But if, for the sake of convenience, we call it a religion, certainly there is no single system of any sort in the West, save perhaps the Christian religion, that corresponds to the pervasiveness of its influence in China. It is not an arithmetical matter of counting the number of adherents that profess or practice one or the other faith. It is a matter of determining the depth and the extent to which either religion has modified the thoughts and actions of men in two widely separated portions of the globe. Here, then, the correspondence between Confucianism in China and Christianity in the West ceases. For Christianity, as interpreted and practiced in the West, is by no means a simple thing. On the contrary, it is a composite growth into which numerous cultural streams from the civilized pagan world have entered, and, with greater or less success, have been accommodated to the pressure of historical circumstances. Confucianism, on the other hand, has remained virtually an unaltered doctrine imbedded as an unequivocal rule of faith and practice in the minds and hearts of countless generations of Chinese. If we could imagine the Christianity of apostolic days as neither a fulfillment nor a criticism of an older religion, and, with no taint of otherworldliness, interested in human society as such; if we could further imagine that because of its interest in human society as such it provided clear-cut counsels as to the best method of social organization; and if, finally, we could represent to our minds its continuous and unchanged acceptance by Western peoples throughout the two thousand years of its history, we would have something like a parallel to the character and course of Confucianism in China. Then only could we say with any degree of accuracy that Christianity is to the West what Con-

fucianism is to China. But actually, it is apparent that no such simple relation exists. The comparative student is accordingly compelled to trace two divergent histories of ideas—ideas that are not merely the thoughts of any particular individual, that may seem to have sprung somehow, Minerva-like, from the mind of a founder, be he Confucius or any one else; but ideas in the more effective and less otiose sense as nuclei of concrete mental organizations—of beliefs, sentiments, ideals and convictions—the articulated whole of which may, for want of a better term, be regarded as a people's mentality.

Accordingly, if both the view that irreconcilable differences part East and West and the view that suppresses significant differences are incorrect, we shall have to approach the problem of China with neither preconceptions as to her eternal inscrutability nor an uncritical disregard of fundamental cultural divergences. Rather, as we have urged, must we come at the problem with an initial understanding that differences, and intelligible differences, exist. For surely East and West, when they do meet, will meet only on the plane of a mutual understanding.

To return from these somewhat general observations to the thesis that the mentality of the ruling class of China is Confucianism, we cannot introduce a discussion of the Confucian spirit better than by quoting the shrewd remark of a friend who confesses to a complete ignorance of Chinese philosophy and of Oriental thought in general. This individual declared that he suspected that there was really no philosophy in the East at all. What philosophy there was, he opined, was inextricably bound up with religious beliefs and crude cosmologies. And incidentally this is also the verdict of many who have actually explored the field of

Chinese philosophy. Such a statement, no doubt, will come in the nature of a surprise to those who entertain the more widely current notion that the East is the veritable home of philosophy. The idea that the Orient, symbol for all that is mysterious and enchanting, is in possession of a recondite wisdom that somehow or other is totally alien to the shrill metallic civilization of the Occident, is a view too extensively held and too firmly rooted to be easily dispelled. But if we add to the prevalent belief in the Kipling sentiment, that East is East and West is West, the fondness for being fascinated by the exotic and the readiness to think that what is different and unfathomable must in some way belong to a superior order of knowledge, it is not altogether difficult to account for the romantic idealization of the East as the Garden of Eden whence the Western Muse of Philosophy has been rudely expelled, doomed forever to pursue in hopeless distraction the vain quest of an unattainable Truth. Clearly, therefore, we are in need of a definition of terms when we speak of the philosophy of the East.

Now philosophy in the West represents the effort of intelligence to understand itself and the world in which it finds itself immersed. It is an enterprise of the intellect proceeding discursively. It is based upon a spirit, or rather it is the spirit, of independent and fearless inquiry, facing problems, looking for a method and emphasizing human intelligence as an effective instrument in possibly changing the course of human events, or at least in controlling them and thereby perhaps improving human life. It does not announce a final "way of life" and furnish a more or less secure refuge from the inevitable ills of existence, which, precisely because they are regarded as inevitable, are therefore not to be attacked but avoided. If philosophy has been

the guide of life in the West,—and it would be idle to contend that it has been always mindful of this high office,—it has not sought to guide life by providing a sanctuary of safety from the evils of the world and, above all, a means for rescuing human existence from the ceaseless round of retributive reincarnations, as in India. In Buddha's first sermon, for example, where he speaks of deliverance from sorrow and the attainment of Nirvana through the Eight-Fold Path, we have an illustration of philosophy as a "way of life" that is not at all typical of philosophy in the West.

Nor has philosophy in the West, save in its periods of eclipse, sought to guide life by a retrospective elaboration of the wisdom of the ancients in order to provide a mass of regulative details for all the situations of life, as in Confucian China. Going right has for Western philosophy, ever since the time of Socrates, been necessarily conditioned by the possibility of going wrong. To adopt Huxley's phrase, it would rather "go wrong free than go right in chains." It has been said that if a motto for science were being selected it would not be easy to surpass the sayings, which, if they were not the actual utterances of Socrates, were at least inspired by him.[2] "I am one of those," he says in the *Gorgias,* "who are very willing to be refuted if I say anything which is not true, and very willing to refute any one else who says what is not true, and quite as ready to be refuted as to refute: for I hold that this is the greater gain of the two, just as the gain is greater of being cured of a very great evil than of curing another." And again, in the *Critias* he is made to say, "I pray God to grant that my words may endure, in so far as they have been spoken rightly; if unintentionally I have said

[2] R. W. Livingstone, *The Greek Genius,* p. 222.

anything wrong, I pray that he will impose on me the just punishment of him who errs; and the just punishment is that he should be set right." "If Socrates was not a man of science himself," declares Livingstone, "he knew the spirit by which science lives." Philosophy in the West has not been content with the slavish imitation of antiquity nor considered use and wont too sweet or too sacred to scrutinize, and, if need be, to change. Whenever it has not welcomed novelty, change, and the chance of reconstruction, as for instance during the so-called Dark Ages, we say it has not been true to the spirit in which it was conceived and to the Greeks who gave it birth. And for this reason, more than any other, Western philosophy and philosophers, like the Athenians who were always "seeing and hearing some new thing," have been more or less suspect and accorded little of the respect and the honor shown to Hindu sage or Chinese scholar. As Gomperz says of Socrates, "he who touches on fundamental problems is likely to incur suspicion and to be taken for a disturber of the social peace, a dangerous agitator and revolutionary. It is hard for any one to meddle with the foundations of the social edifice and escape the accusation of designing its overthrow. Nothing was too high or holy to be questioned. The ordinary respectable citizen could hardly see in him anything but an idle lounger and a blasphemous quibbler." [3] For a time in the West, to be sure, philosophy did forsake what may be called the Socratic spirit of free inquiry by unhampered intelligence and become a consolatory "way of life." This was the period of the so-called post-Aristotelian philosophy when men sought compensation for the loss of political independence in the comforts of philosophy and the mysteries of religious cults

[3] *Greek Thinkers,* vol. ii, p. 50.

imported from the Near East. And for another and longer season philosophy sought to guide life by restraining thought and inquiry and pointing backward to antiquity until Bacon, declaring antiquity to be the childhood of the race, set philosophy again in the path on which Socrates had placed it.

It is convenient, therefore, to think of Western philosophical speculation as going back to Socrates in the sense of having received a fresh inspiration from the Socratic injunctions to think strenuously, see clearly and follow the argument whithersoever it might lead, with a faith that human intelligence would prove equal to the tasks that lay before it. In this connection Benn's estimate of the influence of Socrates may be quoted without further comment: "Perhaps, after all, it is not a very novel thesis to maintain that Socrates first brought out the idea, not of knowledge, but of mind in its full significance; that he first studied the whole circle of human interests as affected by mind; that in creating dialectic he gave this study its proper method, and simultaneously gave his method the only subject-matter on which it could be profitably exercised; finally, that by these immortal achievements philosophy was constituted, and received a threefold verification—first, from the life of its founder; secondly, from the success with which his spirit was communicated to a band of followers; thirdly, from the whole subsequent history of thought." [4]

But meanwhile we might ask ourselves what the situation was at the time of Socrates in the non-Mediterranean world, and more specifically in China. Confucius, the "uncrowned king of China," "the teacher and pattern for all ages," as he has been styled by his admiring fellow-countrymen, whose life and labours have influenced the thoughts and

[4] *The Greek Philosophers,* pp. 106–107.

conduct of untold generations of Chinese and fixed the character of Chinese social and political institutions for more than two thousand years, was almost a contemporary of Socrates. He was born, in fact, in 551 B. C. and died just ten years before the birth of Socrates. But what is of more striking significance than this coincidence of dates is the *similarity* in the social conditions which each faced and the *difference* in the method which each employed to accomplish his end.

The Athens of Socrates, we know, was an Athens of social upheaval. The spirit of free inquiry which had manifested itself in Ionia had been developed to its highest point in Athens after the Persian War. "The war brought splendour to Athens and fifty years of empire; but the lasting result for mankind was something deeper. It focussed in Athens, a more central point for the whole Greek world than Ionia had been, all the light in art, science, philosophy, and literature that had been growing for two hundred years. Athens became the acknowledged intellectual leader, which though eclipsed later on by Alexandria, continued for nearly a thousand years."[5] The sophistic movement was but one expression or outcome of this free spirit of investigation. If nature had been the first great riddle to be attacked, man and his life in society was the second. But a society whose members for the most part were still in the stage of custom, and therefore unable to think for themselves, could ill accommodate itself to the individualistic doctrines of the sophists. Social disintegration necessarily followed when customary standards and beliefs were unable to meet the strain that was placed upon them by questioning minds. Socrates con-

[5] F. S. Marvin, *The Living Past*, p. 7.

sidered the situation to be a critical one, and with all the zeal of the Hebrew prophets seeking to raise the moral standards of their people by summoning them back to a clearer vision of their God, he laboured among his fellow-Athenians, urging them to follow the vision of the truth that was in them. And if the aim was a moral aim, the method was distinctly and emphatically the method of intelligence. He invited men to think for themselves and embarrassed them, as we know, by his insistent invitation to do so. There was the appeal, made nowhere else in the world at the time, to cultivate the habit of suspended judgment, of provisional scepticism in order to reach clearer and less dogmatic conceptions; there was the appeal to observation and the cautious weighing of evidence, to discussion rather than bias—in short, to intelligent reflection to the end that men might know themselves and discover and give their allegiance to new norms of conduct to replace the old customary sanctions that were fast losing their hold on men's minds. Intelligence is thus insisted upon and exalted as the instrument for individual and social regeneration. Nor did this spirit desert him in the hour of death. He is talking about immortality and he says to his friends: "'At this moment I am sensible that I have not the temper of a philosopher; like the vulgar, I am only a partisan. Now the partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is merely this—that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather trying to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter with me. And do but see how much I gain by the argument.

For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth'; 'but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I will not distress my friends with lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, but will die with me, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates; agree with me if I seem to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me with might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and, like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die. And now let us proceed.'" [6]

So much space has been devoted to the familiar figure of Socrates because, in the words of John Stuart Mill, "mankind cannot be too often reminded that there once lived a man named Socrates"; and because, for the purposes of this study, the West, in particular, cannot be too often reminded of his existence. It would, of course, be a mistake to think him a variant individual, a biological sport of the Ionian race. Rather is he the typical representative of the Greek genius. In another arresting passage of Benn, Greek emphasis upon intellect is portrayed in the following words: "During the two centuries that ended with the close of the Peloponnesian War, a single race, weak numerically, and weakened still further by political disunion, simultaneously developed all the highest human faculties to an extent possibly rivalled but certainly not surpassed by the collective efforts of that vastly greater population which now wields the accumulated resources of modern Europe. This race, while maintaining a precarious foothold on the shores of the Mediterranean by repeated prodigies of courage and genius, contributed a new

[6] *Phaedo.*

element to civilization which has been the mainspring of all subsequent progress, but which, as it expanded into wider circles and encouraged an increasing resistance from without, unavoidably lost some of the enormous elasticity that characterized its earliest and most concentrated reaction. It was the just boast of the Greek that to Asiatic refinement and Thracian valour he joined a disinterested thirst for knowledge unshared by his neighbors on either side. And, as Aristotle reminds us, a similar distinction obtained among the Greeks themselves. He does not name the Ionian race to which he himself belonged; but we must suppose that when he refers to those Greeks in whom energy and intellect were happily combined, this race was especially present to his thoughts, including of course the Athenians whom friends and foes alike counted as being of Ionian stock." [7]

The words of Xenophanes, "The Gods did not reveal all things to men at the start, but as time goes on, by searching, they discover more and more," may almost be taken as an epitome of the Greek regard for intellect. They show unmistakably that spirit of which Socrates was but an illustrious exponent. Pythagoras, we are told, defined the philosopher as one who loves knowledge for its own sake. To be sure, this is a doctrine that may easily have unwelcome consequences in that it may lead, as indeed it did lead, to a spirit of aloofness in the philosopher who was contented to be merely a "spectator of all time and all existence," as Plato put it. But, given the will to know, given an interest in the world as just so much material for intelligence, the spirit of inquiry must come to include both the world of nature and of human relationships; philosophy must come to find natural connections with science and the practical

[7] Op. cit., p. 1.

life, and knowledge must come to be regarded as both power and virtue.

In the distant land of China Confucius was confronted by a social situation resembling in many respects the crisis in Athens. Briefly, and as far as we can make out from the scant historical information, the situation was as follows: a revolution had occurred in Confucius' native state, the feudal state of Loo, which drove him from office. Deprived of his political position, he wandered for eight years from province to province teaching virtue wherever he went. At the end of this period he returned to his native state where by this time his enemies had gradually lost their authority. Confucius was again appointed to an official position, this time to the position of prime minister. Subsequent corrupt practices at the court aroused the displeasure of the sage. The voluptuous monarch had grown weary of the stern morality of his prime minister and when a friend presented the prince with a collection of very fascinating courtesans the gift was accepted with almost indecent alacrity. This aroused so much indignation in Confucius that he left his home for a second time to wander as an exile throughout the provinces of China. For twelve years, we are told, he travelled from place to place, often harassed and persecuted, but always pleading for the life of virtue. He saw on every hand absence of principle, political corruption, loose living, selfishness, want of sincerity—in short, a complete disintegration of customary control. His mission in life was to remedy this condition of moral chaos, and, like Socrates, he construed this mission as somehow divinely ordained. "After the death of King Wan was not the cause of Truth lodged here in me?" [8] But unlike Socrates his method was not the method

[8] *Analects,* Book IX.

of intelligence; in fact, it was the very reverse of Socrates' appeal to reason. Instead of styling himself a gad-fly to sting men into thinking for themselves or an intellectual obstetrician to assist with the birth of truth, Confucius urged men to return to the ancient books of China for the necessary principles of moral and social regeneration. He believed that the remedy lay in a reassertion of the wisdom of the ancients and in a literal imitation of the past. There was to be no departure from the ways for regulating private and public life that had been set up by antiquity. Confucius called himself a "transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients."[9] All necessary knowledge and wisdom had been discovered. The only task remaining was to arrange and consolidate the gains of the past, and study these reverently as patterns to be faithfully followed in the emergencies of the present and the uncertainties of the future. At this point it is necessary to describe briefly the transmitting task of Confucius.

The actual labours that Confucius performed in fixing for over two thousand years the cultural tradition of his fellow-countrymen were not of an original nature. His literary activities consisted for the most part of compilation and revision of the sacred books which had from time immemorial been regarded as the source of all wisdom and knowledge. These he pruned of certain extravagances and edited with great care, stating his own opinion, both in the text itself and in supplementary notes.

Of the Chinese canon there are two divisions, viz., the Five Classics and the Four Books. The first class consists of: 1. The Book of History or Book of Records. This contains a plain historical narrative of the events which occurred

[9] *Analects*, Book VII.

during the first dynasties of the Chinese kings. It is full of moral reflections and abounds in instructions as to the pursuit and practice of virtue. 2. The Book of Changes. This is the book of trigrams that is still the basis of Chinese divination. These trigrams are sets of three lines, two of which are broken. The trigrams are combined into hexagrams, and by their different combinations sixty-four variations are obtained. Probably no one understands the Book of Changes or ever will. A good description of this sample of occult wisdom is to be found in Dr. Paul Carus' little monograph on *Chinese Philosophy*. According to the legend, the trigrams were discovered by the mythical founder of the Chinese monarchy on the back of a tortoise which emerged from the Yellow River two thousand seven hundred and fifty years before the Christian era. The point to be noted is that events, qualities, and existences of all sorts are attached to each of the various symbols, and that the Book of Changes is closely bound up with Chinese cosmological ideas. Confucius himself had a high regard for its mysterious lore, though he never claimed to understand it. He is reported to have said, "If some years were added to my life, I would give fifty to the study of the Yi (Book of Changes) and then I might come to be without great faults." 3. The Book of Odes or Book of Poetry. This is a collection of three hundred and eleven odes, some selected and some perhaps composed by Confucius, and all of a more or less patriotic or moral character. Confucius frequently enjoined his disciples to study the Book of Odes for their instructive value, and we are told in the Analects that his frequent themes of discourse were the Odes, the History and the Rules of Propriety. 4. The Book of Rites or Book of Ceremonies. This is a collection by Confucius of the

various customs inculcated by former sages, a collection in which all the minutiæ of daily life, even sitting, standing, eating, sleeping, and walking, are dwelt upon, and the proper mode of action prescribed under almost all possible contingencies. It has been said that one has but to read this book in order to understand the fixity and immobility of Chinese customs. 5. The Spring and Autumn Annals, so called because it was started in the spring and completed in the autumn. It is the one work that was written by Confucius himself and is the product of his old age. It contains particularly a history, covering some two hundred years, of his native state of Loo, which was one of the feudal states in what is now the province of Shantung.

The second class, or the Four Books, consist of: 1. The Analects, which is an important collection of the sayings of Confucius recorded by his various disciples. 2. The Great Learning. This is a treatise setting forth how to regulate the thoughts and correct the heart of the individual in order to establish the family, which is the basis of Chinese society, and so govern the country and produce concord throughout the whole world. 3. The Doctrine of the Mean. This is a short treatise showing how the ideal character of the Superior or Princely Man must observe the principle of order found in Nature. This is unquestionably the teaching of the Doctrine of the Mean. 4. The Book of Mencius, which is a philosophical treatise on government and morals, written by Mencius, the greatest of Confucius' followers and ranking second only to the master in the admiration and esteem of the Chinese.

Confucianism, summed up in these works, is thus to be regarded as from the very outset a glorified conservatism, and this goes far toward explaining the monotonous sequel of

Chinese history. Indeed one could not well conceive of a sharper antithesis than that which exists between the forward-looking method of Socrates the inquirer, which is the very breath and spirit of Western philosophy, and the archaism of Confucius the transmitter, which has for centuries been at once the spirit of Chinese civilization and a cause of its stagnation. "The Master said, 'I am not one who was born in the possession of knowledge. I am one who is fond of antiquity and earnest in seeking it (knowledge) there.' " [10]

It may seem gratuitous to stress the point that intelligence was never emancipated in China. But it should be constantly borne in mind that the unity of Chinese civilization, a unity that in some respects is truly marvelous, was achieved by having rivetted upon it the incubus of an ancient tradition which meant the sacrifice of all possibility of progress. Only in our day is the Chinese beginning to "think for himself," and to appreciate the possibilities and consequences of free intelligence operating—often, to be sure, in a misguided manner—in the sphere of human relationships. We cannot emphasize too strongly this divergence in method and spirit between the West and the greatest country of the East. The fifth century B. C. really marks a spiritual parting of the ways between the civilization of Europe and the civilization of China. It needs always to be remembered that Confucius considered his task to be to synthetize, in order to conserve and make more effective, the heritage from the past. For him, therefore, the problem seemed entirely different from that of his near contemporary in Greece, who considered his mission to be the erection of a new foundation for life and morality based upon man's reason and reflection. The former arrested the development of social theory and

[10] *Analects,* Book VII.

practice in China, albeit on a very high plane, for twenty-five hundred years; the latter initiated a history of thought. The forces of traditionalism, never entirely absent in Greek society, and increasing in strength slowly but surely prior to Socrates' day, led to his repudiation and his death. But no one could by the greatest stretch of imagination think of Confucius as a radical and an innovator. He never thought of himself as anything but a "transmitter," a transmitter of custom and usage and traditional principles which the ancient rulers from the very dawn of recorded Chinese history had bequeathed to succeeding generations. The "truth once delivered" had been forgotten in the lives of princes and kings. It therefore had to be revived. Good government and a good society, possible only when individuals were themselves good, were alike for Socrates and Confucius the aim and goal to be striven for. But for Confucius the principles for the most perfect regulation of private character and the most perfect social arrangement were reckoned as having been already revealed and handed down from the society of an earlier day. Resuscitation of the past in order the better to duplicate the past rather than prospective fashioning of the future in the light of the past, is thus the key-note of Confucian thought, and, until the present generation at least, the most prominent feature of the Chinese mentality.

It seems scarcely necessary to suggest that the Socratic impulse to use intelligence in the control of life is the impulse of modern science in the West, and that, on the other hand, the absence of this same Socratic impulse is responsible to a very great extent for the torpid condition of China for so many centuries. It is interesting to speculate on all the various forces that combined to bring about the rise of modern

science in the seventeenth century, and, of course, it would be an absurd piece of extravagance to attribute the phenomenon simply to the life and death of Socrates. But it is surely more than a fancy or conjecture to say that if we extend the Socratic method of the careful use of intelligence as an instrument of control in the world of human relations to the world of physical nature, and then think of the control of nature as contributing to the further control and improvement of human relations, we have modern science and modernity. The impulse to be curious about the meaning of "Justice," let us say, and straightway to embark upon an uncertain voyage of discovery to ascertain its meaning because it is felt that this meaning, once discovered, will enhance human welfare, is one with the impulse to inquire patiently and systematically, by observation and experiment, into the secrets of nature so that nature may be made to contribute to the improvement of man's estate. Xenophon tells us in his *Memorabilia* how Socrates "used always to talk about what related to man, and consider the meaning of piety, impiety, honour, dishonour, justice, injustice, moderation, madness, courage, cowardice; asking what do city and politician, government and governor connote, and reflecting on those topics, knowledge of which makes a man deserve the name of καλὸς κἀγαθός, ignorance of which, the name of slave." [11] And it was Aristotle, we may remember, who declared that "two things may be ascribed to Socrates, his inductive reasoning and his fixing of general concepts."

In a very real sense, therefore, the Socratic impulse is the same impulse that motivates modern science. For intelligence once liberated and urged to operate freely in any

[11] Livingstone, op. cit., p. 223.

sphere must sooner or later assert itself in all spheres, influence men's lives at every point, and reveal to them ever new possibilities of achievement. Modern science is teaching us with renewed conviction the truth which Sophocles taught in the Age of Pericles. Would it be too rhetorical to say that we may sing again with a fresh insight into its meaning the pæan of human power which the dramatist puts into the mouth of the famous chorus of the *Antigone:* "Of all strong things none is more wonderfully strong than Man. He can cross the wintry sea, and year by year compels with his plough the unwearied strength of Earth, the oldest of the immortal gods. He seizes for his prey the aery birds and teeming fishes, and with his wit has tamed the mountain-ranging beasts, the longmaned horses and the tireless bull. Language is his, and windswift thought and city-founding mind; and he has learned to shelter himself from cold and piercing rain; and has devices to meet every ill, but Death alone. Even for desperate sickness he has a cure, and with his boundless skill he moves on, sometimes to evil, but then again to good."

The West did move on while the East remained stationary; but for a time the spirit of free inquiry was all but lost and the West came to a long pause. Dogma and an excessive veneration for the past then became the key-note of Western civilization. The incubus under which the mediæval mind was laid was the incubus of an unfortunate ecclesiasticism, of which scholasticism was a product. The most prominent characteristic of scholasticism was its systematization of religious dogma. To this task the schoolmen brought a vast amount of ability and acumen; and it was the want of a worthy subject-matter and the absence of a fruitful direction and goal that gave their speculations that air of unreality

and triviality that to the modern man is so amusing but to Francis Bacon was so exasperating. The Renaissance in the West was in its inception a revolt against the shackles of ecclesiasticism and a return to the sources of the Western intellectual tradition, of which the European mind had for centuries been disinherited. The Western renascence, while not literally a rebirth, was yet a return to a free spirit of an earlier time, and a fresh start in the career of reason that was to lead eventually to science and democracy and a radical transformation in man's whole view of life. The spirit of the Renaissance was no new thing. It was the recovery of a dormant impulse which had existed in the West before and which existed nowhere else in the world at the time. A similar radical transformation affecting the foundations of Chinese society, it may be remarked, is taking place at this moment in a country which ten centuries ago was the most civilized nation on earth. This is a truly amazing phenomenon for the student of society. It has often been compared in its main features to the emergence from mediævalism in the West. Strictly speaking, however, the analogy is far from complete. It loses much of its force when we recall that the renascence of China, unlike the so-called renascence of the West, is not a re-awakening so much as an awakening, not the recovery of what we have been pleased to call the Socratic impulse so much as a reaction for the first time against the dogmatic slumbers into which the nation sank more than two thousand years ago as the result of its slavish idealization of the past. The present marks, then, for the first time in centuries a significant change in the history of ideas in China, and therefore the beginning of a change in its mentality; and philosophy in the Western sense of the word, at last becomes possible—that

is, as an enterprise of free intelligence rather than the quest for a "way of life," or a scholastic commentary on the works of a master.

From the foregoing discussion it must be clear that it would be rash to venture any but the most general predictions as to the ultimate result of this contact between the East and the West. One thing, however, is certain. A remarkable situation has come about, the like of which the world has perhaps never before witnessed. What will be the effect of Western or Westernized Christianity, Western science and industry, Western ideals of liberty and government, upon a people whose cultural tradition differs so radically from that of the West? This is a question to be wondered at and speculated upon. The answer must be awaited with patience and tolerance. Whatever the outcome may be, when a genuine synthesis does take place, we may expect it to be something quite new and unduplicated. To this general statement, it is only necessary to add that the spirit and method of Western science and philosophy, having released this new thing, may with profit seek to guide it in fruitful directions.

In conclusion it may be repeated that the Socrates-Confucius contrast that has been sketched in broad outline has been attempted because it has seemed to us to be a faithful transcript of the more general contrast between the mentality of the West and the mentality of China. If we were to seek a verbal formula by which to characterize the opposition further, it would have to be something like the habitual appeal to the principle of authority versus the habitual appeal to the principle of reason, or traditionalism versus progressivism. Traditionalism or the appeal to the principle of authority must breed a retrospective rather than

a prospective attitude of mind; conservatism as the idealization of the past and a timid shrinking from the future rather than a welcoming of novelty and change in order that novelty and change may be controlled and made to contribute to progress; dogmatism and self-complacency rather than open-mindedness and a discontent that may be diabolic as well as divine; a spirit of dependence rather than one of initiative and buoyant self-reliance—such are some of the qualities that constitute the mentality of Confucian China.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFUCIAN ETHICAL IDEAL

Confucianism is usually described as a politico-ethical system. For the Confucian, ethics and politics are as inseparably conjoined as they were for the Greek. Aristotle, while recognizing their intimate connection, was the first to make them separate subjects of study and thereby give us an independent Science of Politics. However, his master, Plato, did not so separate them, and the Republic is accordingly a treatise on both Ethics and Politics. The Chinese classics, as is indicated by the selections in the text, reveal this same dual aspect. But it may facilitate understanding if for the moment we consider the ethical side of Confucianism by delineating the Confucian ethical ideal, and follow this with a separate chapter devoted to a discussion of the Confucian political ideal.

In describing the civilization of the Chinese, Taylor has said very justly: "Their marked superiority over Babylon and Egypt was the faculty of ethical formulation. They related rules of conduct to fundamental principle, constructed a system of Ethics and set before themselves an ideal of character expressing itself in conduct. Under the inspiration of this ideal the history of China was written; for it formed a standard of remembrance by which certain aspects of fact and story should be preserved, others forgotten; and it was this same ideal which Confucius and his school, who stand for China's very self, formally systematized." [1]

[1] *Ancient Ideals*, p. 45.

If this has been the importance of the Confucian ideal, it may prove profitable to examine into it a little further in order to see just how rules of conduct have been "related to fundamental principle"; to exhibit its psychological implications; to contrast these with assumptions concerning human nature prevailing in the Occident, and in general to orient the Western reader in a view of life and society quite incompatible with his traditional temper and quite foreign to his Western mentality.

Confucianism has been commonly characterized as an elaborate system of ceremony. It has been called the "soulless system of intellectual aristocrats"; it has been dubbed the doctrine of the Superior or the Princely Man. (The latter would be a more literal translation of the term *Kyuin-ts* which appears so constantly in the sayings of Confucius.) It has been considered as the apotheosis of ancestor worship. Now, Confucianism is all of these and something more.

We shall not enter into a detailed discussion of these phases of Confucianism, for there is ample literature dealing with them. It would seem, however, that the ceremonial aspect of Confucianism is that which most frequently arrests the attention of the Westerner, and we may therefore employ a consideration of it as a point of departure for ensuing observations.

The Occidental, with his bluntness and his brusqueness, is prone to identify Chinese morals with Chinese manners, in fact to reduce the former to the latter, and to think that Chinese morality is entirely a matter of observing the minutiæ of etiquette. He may be charmed with the Oriental politeness, if he has had the fortune to have travelled or lived in the East. He may be fascinated by its quaintly ex-

acting details of "good form" or intrigued by the possibility that behind the imperturbable masque of the son of Han lies in reality something more closely akin to his own thoughts and emotions. Conversely, he may be exasperated by Oriental lack of directness—by what Dr. Arthur Smith has felicitously called the "Chinese talent for indirection"—vexed by the meticulous requirements of Chinese social life, and annoyed by what seems to him very often mere superficiality and want of sincerity—in a word, by its apparent "soullessness."

An eminent sinologue has written: "In my opinion the *Li Ki* (Book of Rites or Book of Ceremonies) is *per se* the most exact and complete monograph that China has been able to give of itself to other nations. Its affections, if it has any, are satisfied by ceremony; its duties are fulfilled by ceremony; its virtues and vices are referred to ceremony; the natural relations of created beings essentially link themselves in ceremonial—in a word, ceremony is man as a moral, political and religious being in his multiplied relations with family, country, society, morality and religion." [2] There is much truth in this observation and yet it must not mislead us into supposing that Confucian morality is merely a matter of decorum, a system of exacting rules of deportment called *li*. Taylor's remark that the Chinese "related rules of conduct to fundamental principle" cannot be questioned. And in order to explain this remark, it will be necessary to pursue a brief inquiry into the meaning of the Chinese word *li*.

This word is translated into English as either "ceremony" or "propriety." It is the biggest word in Confucian ethics and its explication would help materially to define the Confucian ethical and social ideal. As Legge has declared in his

[2] M. Callery. Quoted by Williams, *The Middle Kingdom*, vol. I. p. 644.

introduction to the *Li Ki,* "A life ordered in harmony with it would realize the highest Chinese ideal and surely a very high ideal of human character." Legge then goes on to give a thorough explanation of the evolution of the character *li* showing that it is an idiogram with both a religious and moral import. The character *li* consists of two elements. That on the left, called *khih,* is the radical and determines the category of meaning to which the compound belongs. It was the earliest figure employed to indicate spiritual beings, and enters into characters denoting spirits, sacrifices, and prayer. That on the right called *li* is the symbol for a vessel used in performing rites. Thus there is a deep spiritual significance attaching to the compound character which would seem to lift *li* above the sphere of shallow and superficial ceremony.

As for definitions, probably the best single rendering of the term *li* is that to be found in Yen's dictionary. Here it is translated "consonance with established principles, rules or customs." But what are these established principles and why should established principles apparently be equated with rules and customs? A satisfactory answer to these questions would go a long way toward elucidating the meaning of Confucianism.

One who reads the Confucian Analects is bound to be struck by the frequency of the recurrence of the word *li* and the way in which it is employed as practically synonymous with the highest form of life. "Yen Tuan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, 'To subdue oneself and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him.' "[3] Elsewhere we have the

[3] *Analects,* Book XII.

following injunction: "Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety:—then all within the four seas will be his brothers." [4] And again there is the remark of Confucius to his son: "If you do not learn the rules of propriety, your character cannot be established." [5] These passages are sufficient to indicate how important Confucius considered *li* or propriety to be. What, then, are the established principles, a conformity with which constituted *li,* and why should such a conformity be reckoned as the highest type of human excellence?

To accuse a Chinese of a lack of *li* is to charge him with the most serious moral obliquity. It is to impute to him an unnatural human deficiency. An absence of *li* means for the Chinese mind an opposition to nature. There is in Confucianism, as indeed there is in the tradition that is older than Confucius and which he transmitted in systematized form, the basic conception that nature herself is good and prescribes principles and rules for the right conduct of humans. The course of nature is mysterious enough, to be sure; its ways are literally past finding out. There is therefore in the practice of men a fatalistic submission to its decrees. Human fortune and misfortune, human happiness and human disaster are "ordained"; and since as yet there is no science giving rise to the idea of mastery and control of natural events, they are literally inevitable. But these inevitable "appointments" of nature, however harsh or severe they may seem, are felt to depend upon the behavior of humans. Nature is not at bottom bad. She is simply just and requites good with good and evil with evil. The Chinese

[4] *Analects,* Book XII.
[5] *Analects,* Book XVI.

proverb, "Righteousness has its reward and wickedness its reward; if the reward has not yet come, it is simply because the time is not yet ripe," loses its piquancy in translation, but illustrates very succinctly the Chinese attitude toward nature's behavior. Nature is moral and acts in a moral way.

Such an attitude toward nature is not peculiar to China. In early Indian thought, for example, we find a counterpart in the idea of *Rita*. This word has received various translations, but it stands for something like a fixed and eternal order of things, or the course of nature independent of men and yet in its manifestations susceptible to influence through the behavior of man. The Indian theory of Karma, that the actions of men possess a causal potency which must sooner or later bear fruit in good or evil consequences, and the universal belief in transmigration as the medium through which the causal efficacy of conduct is expressed are the corollaries of the older concept of *Rita*. This, I believe, could be successfully maintained. But the point is that there is an interpolation of human actions into the causal nexus called the course of nature, so that nature is envisaged as a moral order. Needless to say, modes in which such a view of nature expresses itself vary in the case of the two countries of India and China.

Returning now to China, nature is a beneficent and often a quasi-benevolent [6] order observing fixed principles of what we may vaguely call "the eternal fitness of things" and requiring the same observance of them by men. Only those

[6] Sinologists seem pretty generally agreed that conceptions of a supreme personal deity were never clearly evolved in China. And yet the personifying imagination could not fail to exercise itself there to some degree. Nature then becomes a quasi-benevolent course of events.

who follow nature, then, are those who possess *li* or propriety, for they are living in consonance with fixed principles of nature. Nature pursues a certain correct course. It is the plain duty of man to conform thereto. The opening sentences of the so-called Chinese Doctrine of the Mean, which are considered to be very mysterious and are calculated to impress and awe the reader, show quite unmistakably the view of nature which we have been attempting to describe: "Being without inclination to either side is called *Chung;* admitting of no change is called *Yung.* By *chung* is denoted the correct course to be pursued by all under heaven; by *yung* is denoted the fixed principle regulating all under heaven. This work contains the law of the mind, which was handed down from one to another, in the Confucian school, until Tsze-Sze, fearing lest in the course of time errors should arise about it, committed it to writing and delivered it to Mencius. *The book first speaks of one principle; it next spreads this out, and embraces all things; finally it returns and gathers them all up under one principle.* Unroll it, and it fills the universe; roll it up and it retires and lies hid in mysteriousness."[7] There is thus somehow a feeling, quite obscure and barely adumbrated, to be sure, but amounting nevertheless to the force of a fervent conviction, that the whole universe is in some way pursuing a path that is, in the last analysis, good; and that human nature, as a phase of the cosmic process, has a fixed course *in rerum natura* that must be followed. This is called "the way of Heaven." Morality then becomes very emphatically "the proper business of mankind," and the Confucian ideal of the "superior man" an ideal of Nature.

It may be added, parenthetically, that the Chinese

[7] Italics mine.

Doctrine of the Mean bears no fundamental resemblance to the Aristotelian Mean with which the student of Western philosophy is familiar. The Chinese Mean or *Chung* as the "correct course to be pursued by all under heaven" is not only something quite invariable but also something altogether independent of subjective judgments in its origin. It exists prior to reflection and is therefore not what the Aristotelian Mean purports to be, a general principle of rationality to be applied in the manifold and complex situations of life.

But now along with the basic view of nature as good, there is in Confucianism the equally basic view that human nature is good. Under the ancient system of education that is only beginning to be superseded by something more modern, the first book that was placed in the hands of the young Chinese student was a book called the Trimetrical Classic, compiled in the eleventh century of our era. This book contains about a thousand characters arranged in one hundred and seventy-eight double lines which the student must commit to memory by way of making his first acquaintance with the written language. It has been described by some one as "a ford which the youthful inquirer may readily pass, and thereby reach the fountain head of the higher courses of learning, or a passport into the regions of classical and historical literature." The opening lines of this curious little volume, which the Chinese student knows far better than the Western youth knows his Sunday School stories, read as follows:

> "Men at their birth are by nature radically good;
> Though alike in this, in practice they widely diverge.
> If not educated, the natural character grows worse—"

Such is the pabulum upon which the growing mind is made to feed, and the contrast with what the Western child early

learns about human nature's original disobedience and fall is too striking to be passed over. Very early in life, then, the mind of the Chinese child is indoctrinated with this basic point of view. It is literally drilled into his soul, for throughout all his later education he is reminded in the more advanced books of his curriculum of this central truth of Chinese civilization, that man is by nature good. Confucius himself summed up the matter briefly in the Analects where he said, "By nature men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart."

But it was Mencius, the chief disciple of Confucius, who formulated most clearly and explicitly this cardinal tenet of the goodness of human nature. "The tendency of man's nature to good," he said, "is like the tendency of water to flow downwards. There are none but have this tendency to good just as all water flows downwards."[8] Again he declared: "From the feelings proper to it, it is constituted for the practice of what is good. This is what I mean in saying that the nature is good. If men do what is not good, the blame cannot be imputed to their natural powers. The feeling of commiseration belongs to all men; so does that of shame and dislike; and that of reverence and respect; and that of approving and disapproving. The feeling of commiseration implies the principle of benevolence; that of shame and dislike, the principle of righteousness; that of reverence and respect, the principle of propriety; and that of approving and disapproving, the principle of knowledge. *Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into use from without.*"[9] This analysis and

[8] *Book of Mencius,* Book VI.
[9] *Book of Mencius,* Book VII. Italics mine.

classification may seem highly fantastic in the light of our more scientific psychology, and it is not necessary to pause to inquire into the details of Mencius' statement, the psychological crudity of which is, moreover, as one would expect, enhanced by translation. The general conclusion that man is by nature good is what we are concerned with here. Nor is Mencius content with the views of his interrogator that human nature might be both good and bad, or neutral and potentially good and bad—a view that would be more in accord with our modern position. He will be satisfied with nothing less than the complete acknowledgment that man's nature *at the start* or man's natural equipment is unequivocally good.

We have now arrived at the two fundamental propositions that serve as foundations for the whole, often bewildering, superstructure of Confucianism. To repeat them, they are, first, that nature is good, and second, that human nature is good. And these two propositions are not separate and distinct truths independent of one another. On the contrary, they are intimately related. The first conditions the second; the second is actually but a corollary of the first, for it represents an extension of the principle of the goodness of nature to comprise specifically human nature. Man's nature, being only a part and product of a more comprehensive reality, must inevitably exhibit the attributes of the all-embracing cosmic process called Nature. This reasoning may therefore be cast into the form of a syllogism in which we would have as a major premise the proposition, the order of Nature is good; as a minor, the proposition, man's nature is a portion of Nature. The conclusion would clearly follow that man's nature is good. The ethical problem

then becomes one of determining and regulating our conduct in accordance with general principles of order and harmony perceivable in the beneficent-benevolent course of natural events. This is what Confucius meant when he told his son that his character could not be established without *li*. The ethical ideal becomes, seems logically compelled to become, a matter of *li* or propriety, i.e., consonance with established principles of Nature herself.

From the foregoing analysis it is apparent that *li* is not mere ceremonialism and meaningless red-tapeism,—in a word, it is something more than scrupulosity. It is of crucial importance, for it provides, according to Chinese logic, the real inwardness of all morals and manners. Indeed it is only the proper sense of *li* that prevents morality and politeness from degenerating into mere formalism and ceremonialism. Hence the insistence upon the constant observation and incorporation of *li* in the life of man. For without it man could not be truly man. He might not be an unnatural monster, but he would certainly be a hollow mockery and a sham. Nature intended him otherwise. To say that the life according to *li* is essentially a round of empty ceremonial is to miss the true import of the Confucian ethical ideal. Morality is for it more than external observance. "If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with the rites of propriety?" asked Confucius. And when a disciple inquired whether ceremonies were then a "secondary thing," the master replied in the affirmative. But we may let Mencius speak for himself: "To dwell in the wide house of the world, to stand in the correct seat of the world and to walk in the great path of the world; when he obtains his desire for office, to practice for the good of the people; and when that desire is disappointed to practice them alone; to

be above the power of riches and honours to make dissipated, of poverty and mean conditions to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend;—these characteristics constitute the great man." [10] This is an expression of an ideal difficult to match in antiquity save perhaps in the Stoic philosophy. And surely such an ideal of the good man is very far removed from mere scrupulous regard of ceremonial rules and regulations.

If, in the foregoing pages, we have succeeded in some slight measure in laying bare what seems to us to be the core of the Confucian ethic and explaining what Taylor called the Chinese "capacity for ethical formulation," certain more general considerations by way of supplementation, clarification, and critical appraisal would seem to follow. The reader will find that these considerations are all more or less closely related.

In the first place, it can hardly be denied that the repeated affirmation of *li* by Confucius and his followers has resulted in formalism. It is a peculiar paradox that the very principle which was intended to give life to morality and be a protection against formalism should have actually contributed to formalism. And this has come about through the fact that *li*, conceived originally as consonance with the goodness of nature, has come by the process of metonomy to mean also conformity with the details of ceremonial practice, and then the practices themselves which, it seems, were not originally regarded as anything more than the outward expression of the inward and spiritual principle.

Confucius himself, it must be added, does not seem always to have kept these meanings of *li* distinct. Yet the real nature of his thought is, I believe, embodied in his declaration that

[10] *Book of Mencius*, Book III.

perfect virtue consists in "subduing oneself and returning to propriety." What he meant was that the insolence of man born of passion and desire, greed and ambition could only be checked and chastened through "returning to propriety." The rules of propriety are just so many *natural* restraints on man's conduct. This restraining function of the rules of propriety is emphasized repeatedly in the Analects. Hence the rules are means for individual and social control. They are not ends. And if rightly understood as the provisions of Nature of which man is a part, they can hardly be, according to the logic of the Chinese mind, wholly external.

However, with the explanations and qualifications that have been offered in preceding pages in mind, M. Callery's criticism of Chinese ceremonialism appears not so unfair. The thousand and one minute regulations governing the conduct of the superior man who is supposedly trying to follow *li* come to be regarded as ends in themselves rather than means, producing thereby that condition in which the letter killeth the spirit. Without the stimulus and opportunity to think, and without the encouragement to develop the power of independent judgment, which, as we observed in the preceding chapter, provided so marked a contrast between the Chinese and the Western tradition, it is not altogether remarkable that the Confucian ethic should have fallen more and more irretrievably into such an unhappy state.

Secondly, the archaism of the Confucian ethic needs to be mentioned. *Li* has been defined as "consonance with established principle, rules or customs." Now the grouping together of rules and customs with established principle may be taken as more than a verbal coincidence and throws a flood of light upon the whole problem of the place of *li* in

the life of Chinese society. What the established principle is we have sought to explain. But why also consonance with rules and customs? Are they the same as established principle according to the Chinese mind? The answer must be in the affirmative. For, when *li* is construed as consonance with rules and customs, we have *li* in the derivative metonomous sense as the *rules* of propriety, which come to be considered as natural and unalterable as any of the other *provisions* of Nature. In short they constitute a part of the fixed scheme of things. The upshot of it all is that men are urged to study and practice the ways of the ancients as the *natural* ways and as the only means for achieving the ideal of goodness. In the Book of Poetry we read: "be always studious to be in harmony with the ordinances (of God or Nature)"; and in the Book of History it is said that in the observance of mourning and sacrifice, ancestors are to be followed. Mencius, commenting upon this passage, adds, "meaning that they received these things from a [proper] source to hand them down." And Mencius quotes both of the above passages without discriminating between Nature's general principles and specific customary rites to be practised in mourning and sacrifice. There is, accordingly, a piece of equivocation here, and the equivocation, however unwarranted, is yet most illuminating. To attribute to the agency of nature the genesis of venerable custom, or to view ancient traditions and institutions as having emanated from the mind of some individual in the remote past who was endowed with superhuman wisdom, is a tendency to be discovered in all early thought. For whatever is so old and so firmly established that no date can be assigned for its beginning men are quite apt to think of as a sanction or prescription of Nature herself. They will be

prone to regard as existent from everlasting unto everlasting anything the origin of which is lost in the mist of the past. In the words which Sophocles places in the mouth of the chorus in the *Antigone:*

> "Tell me when was custom born,
> Yester eve or yester year?
> Days and years she knoweth not,
> She was always here."

And so it happens that a transition or rather equivocation takes place in the unconscious logic of the Chinese mind. If *li* in its original sense is natural, so also are the ceremonial minutiæ (likewise *li*) natural. The ways of the ancients as handed down through language and record and practice then become the *natural* standard by which to judge of the highest conduct, and consonance with them represents the ideal of life. Even so old a book as the Book of History can contain the equivocation to which we have alluded: "From Heaven are the social relationships with their several duties. . . . From Heaven are the social distinctions with their several *ceremonies.*" And so ceremonies become ordinances of Nature, and "without transgression, without forgetfulness, following the ancient canons," as the Book of Poetry has it, becomes the way of the superior man; and the "knowledge of antiquity and the antiquity of knowledge," to use Bacon's phrase, thus operate to enslave the intellect.

It is apparent that if an ethical ideal drawn up in a particular remote age and subject to all the limitations of the period be regarded as true naturally, *in saecula saeculorum,* not only in its general standpoint, but in all its regulative details, then it straightway becomes inflexible and incapable of any inner self-modification. To find the goodness of

human nature correlated with the goodness of Nature herself and then to see in Nature the primordial and eternal sanction for the details of a never-to-be-changed ethical system, is a vicious circle that must lead to a stereotyped morality and an arrested social development. All chance of change is precluded and a morality that is prospective in outlook becomes forever impossible. Conservatism or archaism in the form of a recessional chanting of the past is the only course left. An ethics less encrusted with the deposits of the past, free from the benumbing influences of an effete tradition, and making for a mobility of mind and a truly hospitable humanism, is not of course to be conjured into being by mere words. It is to be attained by an awakened curiosity, a surer method, a sounder knowledge and a wider sympathy—in short, by emancipated intelligence. Confucianism could hardly coexist with such tokens of emancipated intelligence unless it underwent much inner revision. This would mean nothing less than a radical transformation of the Confucian mentality. But there is no doubt that without such a modification Confucianism will always be a hindrance rather than a help in the amelioration of Chinese society and the realization of the democratic desideratum of "hope and a renovation without end."

A third point to which we may direct our attention is the view of human nature as good. This view has already been explained at some length, but it bulks so large in the Confucian tradition and is such a cardinal postulate of both the ethical and political thought of China that we may devote some further space to a consideration of its influence upon Chinese life.

A striking antithesis to the human-nature-is-good doctrine of China is to be found in the human-nature-is-bad

doctrine that has obtained in the West for several centuries with more or less undiminished vigor. The dichotomizing of the human soul into a higher and lower principle in the Christian tradition, while perhaps not truly Greek in origin, yet has its roots in Greek philosophy.[11] As a modern writer has put it, "And so when Christianity comes she finds the world in a sense prepared for her. There are old bottles which will hold her new wine and not break. There is a metaphysic and a moral philosophy, and a vocabulary ready for her. S. Paul will find the opposition of 'flesh' and 'spirit' close to his hand: S. John will have the *logos,* in which he can express the Person of Christ: S. Thomas will have the system of Aristotle in which to propound the mysteries of the gospel." [12]

With such an opposition between man's carnal and spiritual natures the cause of man's natural evil is found in his inherited tendencies. And theology traced it to the first man. Hence it comes to be held that "there is no health in us" by nature. Hence the need for salvation through redemption, the need for the atonement for the original sin with which human nature is everywhere contaminated. Human nature itself is not only utterly hopeless, but also utterly helpless. Man begins life as a creature by nature sinful, and his task is conceived as an attempt to escape from sin by the aid of superhuman power. This is, to be sure, an extremely cursory account of a certain view of human nature in the Western tradition, but the reader will recognize for himself the prominence of this view and perceive how it has come about that an ancient attitude of

[11] The philosophy of Plato, for example, shows traces of Oriental influence.

[12] Livingstone, op. cit., p. 237.

hostility rather than a more intelligently cordial interest in human nature occupies a conspicuous place in the Western cultural tradition. Give a dog a bad name, as Dewey reminds us, and he has a hard time living down the reputation.[13] And in this case human nature has been the unfortunate animal. It has not been something with marvelous possibilities and promise to be studied with scientific interest so much as something inherently evil and disturbing which must therefore be carefully regulated and often harshly repressed.

But now in China the orthodox Chinese position has been quite the reverse of maligning human nature. We are not concerned with the uncritical psychology of the view that man's nature is essentially good. But its consequences are not without interest and importance.

It is frequently remarked by foreign residents of China that the Chinese as a people possess no sense of sin. Of course it is not intended that they are more wicked than their Western brethren, as if the absence of a sense of sin were "a double dose of original sin." Many will think that the contrary is the case, and certainly many Chinese think so! Nor is it meant that the Chinese have not well-defined ideas of right and wrong and very definite standards of moral excellence and moral obliquity. This would be altogether too absurd a view to entertain concerning a people which has throughout its history placed such lofty emphasis upon virtue and character. It is, however, a true observation that the Chinese are deficient in a sense of sin as the term is understood in the West, simply because in China human nature has never been regarded as something sunken and depraved and incapable of self-regeneration. It is

[13] *Human Nature and Conduct.* Introduction, p. 1.

hardly conceivable for example that a Confucian could ever have written the Confessions of an Augustine or a Pilgrim's Progress.

The oft-noted irreligion of the Confucian Chinese is certainly a phenomenon, if not springing from, at least closely associated with, the doctrine of the goodness of man's nature and the want therefore of a sense of sin. Whether the proverbial agnosticism, or atheism of the Confucian is the result of the lack of a sense of sin or whether this deficiency is the cause of disbelief in a personal deity is a question the answer to which would take us too far afield, if indeed it could be given. Suffice it to note that these phenomena are interrelated. And we may add in passing that whenever reflection upon the inhospitable phases of life is accompanied by sufficiently developed powers and habits of intellectual analysis, the problem of evil must inevitably make its appearance as one of the riddles of the universe. The character of a people's experience and the profundity of its capacities for philosophic thought are the measure of its sensitivity to the problem. The metaphysical dualism of early thought and the metaphysical dualism of common sense may receive in the course of time more and more explicit construction and formulation. But now if we add to the clearly envisaged fact of evil in general the thought of a personal and perfect God, with the resultant transference of evil to the human soul as its *fons et origo,* so to speak, localizing and concentrating evil in human nature, we have at least a clearly crystallized way of feeling and thinking to replace what may have been before a vague uneasiness. With this localization of evil in man comes the idea of sin. The idea of sin will promote the belief in God and the latter will in turn deepen and confirm man's con-

viction of his congenital corruption and need for divine assistance. But given an individual who is disinclined to posit the sinfulness of human nature, and to whom talk about its radical badness is not only a strange language but even borders upon heresy, and it is not surprising if he prove impervious to religion, as the term is popularly understood, if he seem complacent and callous and cocksure in his comfortable scheme of life, if, in a word, he is an agnostic or an atheist. Something like this must be said to account for the so-called irreligion of the Confucian.

It is to be noted, however, that the foregoing discussion does not have reference to the mass of illiterate and superstition-ridden folk of China. They indeed have their "religions." But we have had in mind particularly the educated Chinese who looks, if not in horror, at least in quizzical and good-natured wonder, at the man who tells him that he is by nature depraved. He starts from such an altogether different premise from that of his Western brother that it is frequently hard for them to see eye to eye on so fundamental a thing as religion.

We have touched upon the tendency to formalism in the Confucian ethic, its traditionalism or archaism, and the consequences of the nature-is-good doctrine. Finally, by way of concluding this *exposé* of the Confucian ethical ideal, we would mention again a permanent feature of Chinese ethics that must have been apparent throughout these pages, namely, the constant entanglement of its ideals with nature. The excessive moralism of the Chinese, by which is meant their proverbial propensity to see in all natural occurrences the presence and operation of a moral law, is the constant symptom of this entanglement. The stories in the little toy-book called the *Twenty-Four Filials,*

designed as they are to impress the Chinese child with the importance of the virtue of filial piety and hence ancestor worship, will reveal as well as anything else the close and necessary connection that exists in the Chinese mind between morals and nature. And we may refer to one of these to illustrate how the two are coupled together.

The story is of a youth whose mother lay sick. On one winter's day she craved some soup made of bamboo shoots. Of course the lad could secure no bamboo shoots at that season. But he went into the bamboo grove and clasping the trees with his little hands wept bitterly. His filial affection so moved Nature that the ground slowly opened and sent forth several shoots which he gathered and carried home. With them he made a delicious soup of which his mother ate, and immediately she recovered from her malady. Thus Nature is moral. Nature intends filial piety. Nature demands it and rewards it.

The tethering of ideals to nature in so uncritical a fashion is a phase of anthropomorphism, which, in all its varieties and forms, must come to exert less and less sway over men's minds in proportion as intellect becomes awakened, knowledge increases, and a truer insight into nature's processes is acquired. That morals shall be made conformable to nature is itself an ideal for which no plea can be too strong. In a sense our ideals must be tethered to nature; but before the two can be fruitfully conjoined they must be provisionally detached from each other. The progressive emancipation of the intellect in the West, the rise of Western science as the result and further cause of this emancipation, and the impersonal spirit of scientific analysis which Western science has engendered and fostered, have secured for us a by no means complete, but at all

events a degree of disentanglement of morals from nature not as yet found in China. Yet it is destined to appear there more and more. We need to recognize the truth of the distinction that Santayana has so well made between an ethical attitude with an *ethical* ground and an ethical attitude with a *natural* ground. When our ideals become rooted in nature *qua* nature and are no longer drawn from the plenitude of a nature colored by the ideals and attitudes which we have injected into it from our own persons, then natural conditions will have a chance to be considered prior to results, potencies prior to realizations, and natural causation will come to be studied as the instrument of idealization. With such a conformity of morals to nature it will be nothing more than natural to endeavour to bring existence into harmony with ideals; in a word, to make progress—which Confucianism has never allowed China to do.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFUCIAN POLITICAL IDEAL

In the two preceding chapters dealing respectively with the mentality of Confucian China and the Confucian ethical ideal the political principles of Confucianism have in a measure been foreshadowed. This has been inevitable, for, as has been said, Confucianism is a politico-ethical system in which rules and principles for the guidance of private life are inextricably bound up with those for the regulation of the public careers of men entrusted with the responsibility of governing. With this close affiliation of ethics with politics in mind, it will be our task in this chapter to try to portray the Confucian political ideal corresponding to the ethical ideal already set forth.

In referring with some disparagement to the "short sentences and aphoristic sayings in matters political that occur in early writings in the East," [1] Professor Willoughby doubtless had in mind the absence of that theoretic impulse which took its rise in Greece and which, as we have remarked, has been so conspicuously lacking in the whole Chinese cultural tradition. Two distinct lines of development, or, more accurately, a phase of development and a phase of arrest in two widely separated portions of the earth may, we observed, be traced back to at least the fifth century before the Christian era. This century marked what we ventured

[1] See Introduction.

to call a spiritual parting of the ways. Greek theorizing produced among other things a philosophy of the city state, and to this impetus our Western political philosophies owe their rise. A distinguished modern authority has expressed our debt to the Greeks in the field of politics in the following felicitous manner: "The first valuable contribution the Greeks made to political study was that they invented it. It is not too much to say that, before fifth-century Greece, politics did not exist. There were powers and principalities, governments and subjects, but politics no more existed than chemistry existed in the age of alchemy. . . . Rameses and Nebuchadnezzar, Crœsus the Lydian and Cyrus the Persian, ruled over great empires, but within their dominions there were no politics because there were no public affairs. There were only the private affairs of the sovereign and his ruling class. Government and all that pertained to it, from military service and taxation to the supply of women for the royal harem, was simply the expression of the power and desire of the ruler. The great advance made by Greece was to have recognized that public or common interests exist and to have provided, first for their management, and secondly for their study. In other words, the Greeks were the first to rescue the body politic from charlatans and to hand it over to physicians." [2]

This is a statement which, if construed too strictly, would doubtless preclude the use of the term "political thought" in discussing the thought of Confucius and his followers on government. And yet it is our purpose to show that there was a certain type or trend of thinking in China that must be described as political even though there was never any

[2] *The Legacy of Greece*, ed. by R. W. Livingstone, 1922, article *Political Thought*, by A. E. Zimmern, pp. 331–332.

well-defined system or explicit theory of politics. But to come back to the development of our Western political thought which derives from the Greeks, it is well to be reminded that the greatness of the Greek achievement can be "best recognized when we consider how large a place the true study of politics, and the terms and ideas to which it has given rise, fills in the mind of the modern man—especially in the minds of the modern Englishman. Justice and liberty, law and democracy, parliament and public opinion—all these and many more we owe to the peasants and craftsmen of the small Greek republics who, having felt the need for a better management of their humble concerns, set to work to provide it, with the same inventiveness, the same adaptation of means to end, which led them in other fields, to the invention of the classic temple or of the drama. If it is going too far to say that every modern politician owes his stock-in-trade of general ideas to the Greeks, there are certainly few who do not owe them their perorations." [3]

And although the city state disappeared and was swallowed up in the Roman empire, the influence of the thought of Plato and Aristotle and the Stoic philosophy never perished, but in some fashion always persisted. However ignorant Europe might have been at any time of the writings of Plato and Aristotle or the literature embodying the Stoic philosophy of Nature, these constitute an important element in the Western intellectual tradition. Of this the student of the history of Western thought is well aware. But to offer one or two illustrations, Christianity enters the empire and an Augustine gives us the *City of God* in which the philosophy of Plato is blended with Christian doctrine.

[3] Ibid.

The Christian Church becomes the spiritual society of the predestined faithful, the earthly counterpart, as well as the means, for that eternal kingdom which is man's hope and destiny—"that most glorious society and celestial city of God's faithful, which is partly seated in the course of these declining times, wherein 'he that liveth by faith' is a pilgrim amongst the wicked; and partly in that solid state of eternity, which as yet the other part doth patiently expect, until 'righteousness be turned into judgment,' being then by the proper excellence to obtain the last victory, and be crowned in perfection of peace." It is hardly necessary to dwell upon the importance and influence of this conception of the Church's place in society in mediæval political thought. Or again the Stoic Logos crystallizes into a concept of Natural Law and "right reason" in Roman jurisprudence, and this concept becomes a permanent and continuous possession of political theory throughout all the Middle Ages until, in the sixteenth century, at the hands of a Grotius, for example, it receives a fresh and explicit formulation and is made the corner-stone of an attempted system of international law. Once more, in the *Summa Theologica* of Aquinas, while the thoughts of Aristotle, the Master, are of course the predominating element, yet the Stoics, Cicero, Roman imperial jurists and St. Augustine are all fused together with Aristotle into a complete philosophy of man's human and divine nature and destiny.

Such scattered examples as the above are sufficient to suggest to what extent Greek philosophy perdured and operated in the subsequent political thinking of the West. They are enough to impress us with the fact of a more or less continuous, albeit devious and at times tardy development in political thought from the Greeks to modern times. If the

interests of different ages were not always the same, and if the method and spirit were not always identical—as indeed they were not—none the less the fact remains that the actual results of Greek philosophy in some fashion persisted. And accordingly the genesis of Western political ideas is to be found within and not outside the history of western civilization. This bald statement is a platitude; but platitudinous though it may be, it expresses a truth to which we do not always attach sufficient importance. The study of Western political philosophy is the study of political ideas with reference to principles, real or alleged, that have been established by previous thinking in the West. The study of Chinese political thought is the study of political ideas that have had an altogether different history. Thus one would be led to expect a marked disparity in outlook and method and conclusions between the political thought of the West and the political thought of China. And an attempt at an unbiased comparison would seem to be an undertaking possibly not without value for the political thinking of both China and the West.

Now the greatest and most significant difference, a difference pregnant with important consequences, is to be found in the fact that Chinese political thought has never developed the idea of the state, whereas Western political thought makes it the corner-stone of its political theorizing.

Indeed it is the fact of this difference that chiefly impresses the Oriental when he attempts to understand the political philosophy of the West. We may quote, at some length, the words of a young Chinese publicist who declares that "The peculiar merit of Chinese political thought is that *it does not recognize the existence of the state as a self-sufficing entity at all.* We commonly hear the criticism that the

Chinese people are beyond salvation because they have not evolved the idea of the state, of the nation. This is true if we take the Western ideal as the standard of judgment. When everything in political action is put on the basis of conquest, of sheer physical power, then it *is* necessary in order to survive that the people who are the object of attack rally their forces together, forming a nation and trying to defeat the invading Power on its own ground. This is, in fact, what we in China are doing and Heaven forbid that we be considered militaristic, or cruel, or barbarous, or what not when we have conquered the West. It will be the West conquering itself if that day should ever come.

"But it seems that I am waxing chauvinistic. There is, however, no reason to do so, if the Western nations acquire more wisdom and not only give credit to the profound political philosophy which we have evolved but also go far enough to imbibe its spirit.

"Now, as I said, Chinese political philosophy gives no distinction between the state and the individual; the state as the West conceives it, is in fact non-existent. And that, instead of being our weakness, as is generally supposed, is our strength. One of the most characteristic ideas which lies at the very foundation of the Chinese political system is expressed by Confucius in his 'Higher Learning,' and it is the idea which occurs again and again among the later thinkers. It is this:

"'The illustrious ancients, when they wished to make clear and propagate the highest virtues to the world, first put their states in proper order. Before putting their states in proper order, they regulated their families. Before regulating their families, they cultivated their own selves. Before cultivating their own selves, they perfected their souls. Before perfecting

their souls, they tried to be sincere in their thoughts. Before trying to be sincere in their thoughts, they extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things and seeing them as they really were. When things were thus investigated, knowledge became complete. When knowledge was complete, their thoughts became sincere. When thoughts were sincere, their souls became perfect. When their souls were perfect, their own selves became cultivated. When their selves were cultivated, families became regulated. When their families were regulated, their states came to be put into proper order. When their states were in proper order, then the whole world became peaceful and happy.'" [4]

It is no part of our purpose either to admit or to answer the charges against the West that are contained in the above statement. Two things, however, seem to Mr. Chang Hsin-hai to be clear. They are first, that the idea of the state is an exclusively Western idea and secondly, that the state is force.

We find this line of thought by no means confined to isolated individuals. Inquiring minds both in the East and the West are asking about the soundness of nationalism and questioning the validity of our conception of the state, which, whatever forms it has taken, seems at least to be partly responsible for the catastrophe of a world war and many of its consequent evils. The quotation just given is seen clearly to impugn the "idea of the nation, of the state." This is by no means an uncommon attitude amongst reflective minds in the East everywhere. It is most apparent in the countries of India and China. As for China, it needs to be recorded simply as a statement of fact that in many quarters of the young awakening China there is a cynical and uncritical

[4] *Chinese Political Thought and the West,* article by Chang Hsin-Hai, *The Nation,* May 3, 1922.

acceptance of the opinion that the nation and the state mean force, and the slogan is that after all might does make right. If one had not heard this so often from the lips and seen it in the writings of Chinese students one would hesitate to set down so melancholy a fact. The determination therefore exists—a determination which first appeared in the Oriental country that has in a few decades become one of the strongest and most formidable of the nations of the world—that if the game of force is the game that the world is going to play, then China cannot afford to stay out. Accordingly, a state strongly built according to the best Western specifications is the thing of immediate importance. Ask a group of any ten more or less mature Chinese students what they think is the secret of Western "Christendom's" success and the chances are that the majority will answer "Power," by which they vaguely mean some sort of physical force. Seek to explain the disillusionment of young China over her diplomatic defeats and numerous limitations of sovereignty at the hands of Western or Western-learned aggressiveness and one will find that it springs from the conviction that Western civilization means somehow the apotheosis in the state of might. What, then, does the West understand by that institution called the State, which Chinese political thought is said not to recognize and which is so repugnant to many Orientals?

It may be gratuitous to observe that the conception of the State with all its many variations has arisen since the Middle Ages. The political problem of the Renaissance was to disentangle the State from the Church. Writing of the unity of the Middle Ages, Ernest Barker points out in a very happy fashion the absence of the State as an independent entity in the Middle Ages: ". . . the State as such can hardly be

traced in the Middle Ages. The State is an organization of secular life. Even if it goes beyond its elementary purpose of security for person and property, and devotes itself to spiritual purposes, it is concerned with the development of the spirit in its mortal existence, and confined to the expansion of the mind in the bounds of a mortal society. The Middle Ages thought more of salvation than of security, and more of the eternal society of all the faithful, united together in Christ their Head, than of any passing society of this world only. They could recognize kings, who bore the sword for the sake of security, and did justice in virtue of their anointing. But kings were not, to their thinking, the heads of secular societies. They were agents of one divine commonwealth—defenders of the Faith, who wielded the secular sword for the furtherance of the purposes of God. Thus there was one society, if there were two orders of ministering agents; and thus though *regnum* and *sacerdotium* might be distinguished, the State and the Church could not be divided." [5] Commenting then upon the plurality of states, which, though they might have existed in practice, were not by any means recognized in theory, Barker quotes with approval the words of Professor Tröltsch, that "there was no feeling for the State; no common and uniform dependence on a central power; no omnicompetent sovereignty; no equal pressure of a public civil law; no abstract basis of association in formal and legal rules—or at any rate, so far as anything of the sort was present, it was a matter only for the Church, and in no wise for the State." [6]

As we know, the rise of the national state is the outstand-

[5] *The Unity of Western Civilization*, ed. by F. S. Marvin, article *Unity in the Middle Ages*, by E. Barker, pp. 115–116.
[6] Ibid.

ing political event of modern history and it has come about only through the prior achievement of a period of royal absolutism. If, having in mind the overshadowing and ever-present influence of the Church, a common language, a common religion and form of worship, a common spiritual aim, a common ecclesiastical law, and, we might add, a common ignorance, it is appropriate to speak of the unity of the Middle Ages, it is none the less appropriate to speak of the localism and the pluralism of that period. A universal empire, a universal law and a universal Church had been the characteristic expression of the Roman genius. But within this unity there was much diversity. The unity was not so much the unity of integration and articulation as a unity of similarity and identity, that is to say, uniformity. It was not the unity of a solar system so much as the unity of an inchoate nebulous mass. For, when all is said and done, the unity of the Middle Ages is a huge, sprawling, conglomerate fact into which centrifugal and divisive tendencies were to take shape and acquire steadily more and more momentum. Authority comes to be everywhere divided and dispersed. There is a welter of conflicting jurisdictions. The main problem of mediæval political philosophy is the determination of the proper relation between the temporal and ecclesiastical power. But there is not simply a conflict between Church and State, Pope and Emperor. The opposition extends to the relations between emperor and king, king and baron, lord and vassal, and later on, to the triangular contest of king, feudal baron and chartered city. "Society is divided into estates which are often in a high degree class-conscious, but nowhere is there a national consciousness. Decrees of emperor, pope and king, which frequently conflict with one another, are opposed and checked by local law

and custom. Nowhere is there an unambiguous authority standing at the head of a unified political and legal system." [7] Then there follows a period of royal absolutism in England, in France and in Spain; and a desire for a strong unified state of Italy under a monarch is voiced in vain by Machiavelli.

With the Reformation, political theory, like all other phases of intellectual activity, is dominated by the influences of the great Protestant Revolt. Religious persecution and civil oppression arouse the demand for liberty of conscience and civil liberty—demands that were as inseparable in origin as they are in fact—and so political philosophers either seek, on the one hand, to justify absolutism or, on the other hand, to defend revolt. For absolutism and revolt are facts before they are theories. Royal absolutism and popular disobedience and revolt were obstinate facts that in the language of psychoanalysis had to be "rationalized."

The foregoing survey is, to be sure, cursory and fragmentary; but perhaps it is complete enough to suggest the main point that royal absolutism was the means for consolidating the pluralism of the Middle Ages into self-conscious national units. The vague and loose unity of the Middle Ages crystallizes into a diversity of well-defined units in the form of nations. And with the Reformation the last remaining tenuous bond of mediæval union, allegiance to a common Church, disappears. Historically therefore, as well as perhaps logically, the period of royal absolutism was the necessary antecedent of subsequent more enlightened philosophies of government. And this is a fact of no little importance in connection with the evolution of the modern

[7] Krabbe, *The Modern Idea of the State*, translator's introduction, p.xvi.

idea of the State. From the sixteenth century when Bodin first developed systematically the idea of sovereignty, this idea has been the corner-stone of political theory in the West. As Sir Frederick Pollock remarks about the work of Bodin, "He is entitled, indeed, to share with Hobbes the renown of having founded the modern theory of the State; and it may be said of him that he seized on the vital point of it at the earliest time when it was possible. The doctrine referred to is that of political sovereignty. In every independent community governed by law there must be some authority, whether residing in one person or several, whereby the laws themselves are established, and from which they proceed. And this power, being the source of law, must itself be above the law,"[8] i.e., the positive laws which it creates and enforces. "Find the person or persons whom the constitution of the State permanently invests with such authority, under whatever name, and you have found the sovereign. 'Sovereignty is a power supreme over citizens and subjects, itself not bound by the laws.' This power somewhere is necessary to an independent State, and its presence is the test of national independence."[9]

This is not the place to venture upon a discussion of theories of sovereignty. But we should understand that the questions about sovereignty (what is it? and where is it?) came to be raised precisely because people were questioning the rightness of royal absolutism. This was why the solution of these questions was no mere academic affair, but was felt to be of paramount practical importance. If the nation was a fact, need it be governed according to the doctrine of divine right? Authority it was felt there must

[8] *History of the Science of Politics,* pp. 47–48.
[9] Ibid.

be, but can it be otherwise conceived than as resting solely upon the will of a monarch? Louis XIV could exclaim *"L'état c'est moi,"* and believe it too, for it was a statement of fact, however unwelcome the fact was to his subjects. But could not the state be detached from the person of a monarch and still exist unimpaired? If so, what is the state and where does its authority reside? Or, in other words, if sovereignty is not located in the persons of monarchs, where is it to be discovered? It is from such a dialectic that modern Western political philosophy took its immediate rise. Above all things, the state had to be thought of impersonally as an independent entity. Personal government of any sort had to be given up because it meant absolutism. And so there arises in the West the notion of the State as a reality in itself, however variously this reality might be conceived. The discussion of sovereignty was at first no idle juggling of abstractions; and the notion of the State, however vague, makes its appearance with and as the result of this discussion, and comes to figure more and more prominently as a fixed term of discourse.

We may now be in a somewhat better position to understand the statement that "the idea of the nation, of the state has been evolved *only in the West*" and to appreciate the force of the remark that Chinese political thought "does not recognize the existence of the state as a self-sufficing entity at all." Whether this is a "peculiar merit" as Mr. Chang Hsin-Hai believes, we shall not here try to decide.

If China has never evolved the idea of the State, what has been the character of its political thought? The gradual disappearance of the patriarchal idea and the emergence of the idea of the State as an independent and internally organ-

ized entity took place first in Greece. But the Greek *polis* was not what the modern state is. The autarchical city state disappeared and in modern times the state as a sovereign nation made its appearance. The fact to be noted, however, is that the history of Western political philosophy is a movement away from the patriarchal idea. But in China the patriarchal ideal persisted. The family has always been the unit of Chinese society, and by analogy the empire was regarded as only a large family. The emperor, the Son of Heaven, was Heaven's choice for the position of father to a vast multitude of children. Being a father, he was supposed to be good and kind to his family. This is in accordance with the decree of Nature, for only an unnatural father can fail to be kind and considerate to his children. Therefore whenever the monarch became unmindful of the welfare of his subjects, as was often the case in Chinese history, Nature herself was outraged and cried aloud for vengeance. The people might with justice rise up and smite down the unholy offender. Thus was revolution justified in theory. And whoever secured the throne after the revolution was Heaven's choice once more, and he and his descendants might continue to rule until they by their folly and selfishness seemed to have betrayed the trust imposed in them by Heaven. For the revolutions in Chinese history never resulted in new forms of government. As John Locke very shrewdly observed in his second *Treatise*, "People are not so easily got out of their old forms as some are apt to suggest. They are hardly to be prevailed with to amend the acknowledged faults in the frame they have been accustomed to. And if there be any original defects, or adventitious ones introduced by time or corruption, it is not an easy thing to

get them changed, even when all the world sees there is an opportunity for it." Such was the theory, and it was a very simple and transparently clear theory for the Chinese mind.

Meanwhile in practice, there was always very little concern for the so-called central government. Life among the four hundred million went on for the most part in serene disregard and blissful ignorance of Peking. Men went on being born, toiling and trading, eating and idling, marrying and giving in marriage, raising large families, worshipping ancestors according to Confucian principles, practicing Taoist superstitions and submitting credulously to Buddhist impositions. The provinces paid their yearly tribute to Peking and were left pretty much alone so long as the coffers of the imperial government were kept regularly replenished by this stream of tribute. To be sure, there was an elaborate hierarchy of officials of all sorts from the Son of Heaven himself down to the humblest village magistrate. But the average person—and that was the ignorant, illiterate person—was too much absorbed in his private family affairs to give any thought to the central government. It was all a very loose arrangement, in fact; and a good government for the average person, it seems fair to assert, was on the whole conceived of negatively as a government which allowed its subjects to go about their own peaceful pursuits with a minimum of interference and above all of oppression. The Chinese fund of patience was great, but not inexhaustible. When, therefore, it was too sorely tried a new dynasty would be brought in and the people would then settle back in their old ways of life until again goaded to extremities. In theory there was a very intimate relation between ruler and people. In practice the ruler figured little in men's thoughts and

actions. The central government was a thing apart only in the sense of being ignored.[10] The people are, to use a Chinese metaphor, the sea; the Government is the boat; and the sea gives little heed to the boat except to capsize it. There was never in China anything approaching the idea of the state as an abstract personality apart from, and sometimes above, the rules and sanctions that figured in the private lives of human beings. There was never the slightest hint that the state might be a special order of existence. No Chinese philosopher could think of declaring, as some Western philosophers have done, that sovereignty *inheres in general in the state;* or speak, as Rousseau did, of the state as a "public person" or a "moral person." And hence it would be inconceivable for any Chinese philosopher to have held the conception of the state as a superior order of existence not subject to exactly the same moral principles governing the ordinary relations of one human being to another, which is our questionable debt to German idealistic speculation. Thus we may say that the personal idea of government, which is traceable ultimately to the family idea, has always existed in China.

Here, then, we notice a striking contrast between East and West. In the East the ideal of government is benevolent paternalism, whereas in the West, whatever the ideal may be, it is emphatically not any kind of paternalism. The Chinese character for *kok,* which is usually translated "state" has none of the legal or technical significance customarily attaching to the term in the West. It applies to the feudal state of Confucius' day, to a kingdom, or to an empire—

[10] The traditional absence of organized centralization in China explains to some extent the present difficulty of unifying the country.

and connotes simply a portion of territory ruled over by an individual. Government always implies personal management and control.

And here it needs to be added that the personal point of view in government is merely an extension of a principle that pervades the whole of Chinese society, nay, is the foundation of the entire Chinese social fabric. Indeed the Westerner finds it difficult to appreciate and therefore make full allowance for this pronounced Chinese characteristic. For he struggles against thinking in personal terms, and seeks to raise his thought above the plane of interest and prejudice, preference and bias, partiality and partisanship, to the plane of so-called disinterested "principles," and is apt to be irritated by the failure of any one else to do likewise. How much the introduction of Western science with its attitude of disinterested inquiry will modify this tendency to think in personal terms is an interesting speculation. But the fact remains that, for the present at least, the Chinese looks at even the most trivial matters in a personal way, and consequently his Western friend often finds himself offending when he least intends to. That indefinable thing called "loss of face," concerning which the reader may find an entertaining chapter in Arthur Smith's Chinese Characteristics, is one of the most persistent and inexpugnable facts of Chinese society.

But to return, we may repeat that the ideal of government as a personal affair is precisely that which the West is prone to deny. Paternalism, benevolent or malevolent, is just what government must not be under any circumstances. By paternalism we do not mean primarily the collectivism or the increasing extension of governmental functions that is a char-

acteristic feature of our present philosophy of government, although even this phenomenon has its critics. The term "paternalism" connotes rather the idea of a government by men, which I believe Aristotle was the first to contrast with a government by laws. The Western conception of government may be summarized in the words of Harrington as "an empire of laws and not of men." Paternalism as the antithesis of this is in the West a thing to be strenuously resisted, for it would seem to be the turning back of the hands of the political clock—a regress in political theory.

This contrast is instructive if one attempts further to explore the nature of Chinese thought. The thing that impresses the reader of the classics, as an outstanding feature of Chinese political thought, if, indeed, it is not *the* outstanding characteristic, is the constant emphasis upon the need and efficacy of personal morality in governing subjects. Mencius put the matter pithily when he said it would be as foolish for a man to rule without practicing morality as it would be to climb trees in order to catch fish. And Confucius says in the passage already quoted from the Great (Higher) Learning that "from the Son of Heaven down to the mass of people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides." Not only is the end of government the good life, as it was for Aristotle, but also the means for government is ultimately the good life, and furthermore the means for attaining the throne and becoming the Son of Heaven is the good life. For in theory at least Heaven favors only the good. "He who is virtuous will be sure to receive the appointment of Heaven." [11] "The king said, 'What virtue must there be in order to the attainment

[11] *Doctrine of the Mean,* Chap. XVII.

of imperial sway?' Mencius answered, 'The love and protection of the people; with this there is no power which can prevent a ruler from attaining it.' "[12]

It is plain from several of the passages given below that government is a distinctly personal business, and, because it is always so regarded, the standards of personal morality—whatever they may be—must enter into and inform it. Government by moral example, then, becomes for the Confucian the highest form of government. "He who exercises government by means of his virtue," says Confucius in the Analects, "may be compared to the north polar star which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it."[13] And elsewhere the Master remarks, "If good men were to govern a country for a hundred years they would be able to transform the violently bad and dispense with capital punishment."[14] These quotations are simply taken at random from the Four Books and one could find many more of a similar tenor.

Now of course with all this reiterated insistence upon the fact that there can be no good government without good rulers, we have only the announcement of a general truth that is apt to appear platitudinous. Good government is for Confucius that government under which peace and happiness prevail. "Were our master in the position of the ruler of a state or the chief of a family, we should find verified the description which has been given of a sage's rule: he would plant the people, and forthwith they would be established; he would lead them on and forthwith they would follow him; he would make them happy and forthwith multitudes would resort to his dominions; he would stimulate them and forth-

[12] *Book of Mencius*, Book I.
[13] *Analects*, Book II.
[14] *Analects*, Book XIII.

with they would be harmonious. . . ."[15] There is, we observe, no detailed account of what good government is, and no elaboration of what it consists in; no intellectual principle or principles are laid down for the guidance of political organization. There is only the constant assertion that good government cannot exist without virtue. All this may seem quite inconclusive to the Western reader. It undoubtedly suggests to him a failure to come really to grips with the problem of good government. "Of course," he will say, "rulers should be wise and good; but this is stating the problem of good government in entirely too general terms." But here let us glance for a moment at the thought of Plato where we will find, it seems, an effective contrast to the Confucian emphasis upon virtue as the sole requisite for good government.

Plato's rulers were both wise and virtuous, but government for Plato represents the actual enthronement of the principle of intelligence. "Until philosophers are kings," he declares, "or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our state have a possibility of life and behold the light of day." But the rulers do not rule by personal example. A perfect state is that which is harmoniously ordered, and this principle of harmony, so far from being predicated upon family and personal relationships, actually repudiates, with at least apparent ruthlessness, all personal allegiance and personal categories. Plato's principle of harmony is a principle abstract,

[15] *Analects*, Book XIX.

universal, intellectual, and æsthetic. It is supremely impersonal; and therefore, we may say, it represents the effort of intelligence to grasp a principle and hence a philosophy of government that is ultimate, or, as the German would say, *selbstverständlich*. In other words, it is an attempt to remove government from the sphere of the purely personal, place it on an impersonal basis, and make it a science.[16]

But it is to be noted that where the Western reader thinks that he sees an inadequacy in the mere appeal to virtue is precisely where the Confucian would be inclined to see none at all. "Give me morality," the latter says, "and nothing else is necessary." He has the faith that if we seek first this thing called virtue, all other things will be added unto us. So simple and perhaps pathetically trustful a theory as this is scarcely a doctrine fit for use at the present day. But we need to bear in mind the condition of China in Confucius' day. What is now China was then a group of warring feudal states. Violence and corruption among those who exercised authority, insecurity of life and property, and want often of the bare necessities of life seem to have been the rule rather than the exception. And it was customary to think, as did Confucius himself, of an earlier golden age, of the ancient days of King Yao and King Shun and King Yu, the early rulers of the empire, when peace and prosperity pre-

[16] The ancient literary examinations of China for political preferment, which have been called the first civil service examinations ever held, are an expression of a conviction that the wise shall rule. But the analogy with Plato's principle is not as close as one might be led to suppose. That the learned and scholarly should be appointed to office is, or rather was, a maxim of Chinese political thought. But the learned scholar is he who is versed in the ancient literature of the land, the classics. And being most familiar with the wisdom and hence the virtue of the ancients he is deemed most worthy to act *in loco parentis* toward those beneath him.

vailed because men were good—indeed so good that, according to popular belief, doors were never shut at night and no one took that which was not his own. These early kings are mentioned by both Confucius and Mencius as patterns of wisdom and virtue which all subsequent generations could do no better than to imitate. No need is felt for dwelling upon the minutiæ of good government. For if rulers are virtuous and learned in the ancient lore the state is bound to prosper, and conditions will permit the rulers to undertake, as they will undertake, all those measures that will make for the increase of the happiness and outward prosperity of the people. Nothing is really essential then but righteousness, and of course the standard of righteousness is to be found in the past. No wonder that Confucius called himself a "transmitter" and not an innovator.

This boundless faith in the practical efficacy of virtue for the production of good government, however lyrical it may seem, is nevertheless an axiom of Chinese political thought. But we must go a step further. How does it happen to be an axiom? How does it come about that not only is the "essence of greatness the perception that virtue is enough," to borrow an Emersonian phrase, but also that the essence of good government is the same perception of the sufficiency of virtue? Here we come to what seems to me to be a crucial point in the interpretation of Chinese political thought. The political sayings of Confucius and his followers are not miscellaneous *aperçus* lacking any binding principle of logical coherence. These political observations have no meaning apart from ethical ideas and especially from the fundamental ethical principle of China that man is by nature good. This principle we have discussed at some length in the previous chapter. It is certainly an established

principle for Chinese political thought, and that thought is but the logical outcome of the principle. Hence, despite all outward signs to the contrary, and in the face of violence and disorder, Confucius and his followers can believe that the reign of virtue can again be made to prevail. "Let your evinced desires be for what is good and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it." [17] Lest, therefore, we think the Confucian doctrine an absurd fancy or an amusing curiosity, we have to recall that its practical idealism is grounded on a conception of man which confessedly departs radically from conceptions which have influenced Western thought on society and government. In a word, the Confucian thinks that the doctrine is neither amusing nor absurd because he starts from different premises from those of his Western critic.

We have thus far unfolded the consequences of what we started out by calling the personal view of government. We have seen how requirements of personal morality are associated with it and how the emphasis upon morality, which we pronounced the outstanding characteristic of Chinese political philosophy, springs from the idea of human nature as essentially good. We must now attempt to see how a further important feature of Chinese political theory and practice grows out of the principle that man is by nature good.

The Chinese have been called by Mr. Chang Hsin-Hai and many others the true individualists. We have alluded above to their lack of interest in government as such. So great is this lack of interest that it sometimes amounts to a complete disregard of what we may by courtesy call the national gov-

[17] *Analects,* Book XII.

ernment. In his usual entertaining way Arthur Smith has illustrated this matter of Chinese political indifference. In the chapter entitled "The Absence of Public Spirit" he quotes an amusing and instructive story told by M. Huc: "In 1851, at the period of the death of the Emperor Tao Kuang, we were travelling on the road from Peking, and one day when we had been taking tea at an inn, in company with some Chinese citizens, we tried to get up a little political discussion. We spoke of the recent death of the Emperor, an important event which of course must have interested every one. We expressed our anxiety on the subject of the succession to the Imperial throne, the heir to which was not yet publicly declared. 'Who knows,' said we, 'which of the three sons of the Emperor will have been appointed to succeed him? If it should be the eldest, will he pursue the same system of government? If the younger, he is still very young, and it is said that there are contrary influences, two opposing parties at court; to which will he lean?' We put forward, in short, all kinds of hypotheses, in order to stimulate these good citizens to make some observation. But they hardly listened to us. We came back again and again to the charge, in order to elicit some opinion or other on questions that really appeared to us of great importance. But to all our piquant suggestions they replied by shaking their heads, puffing out whiffs of smoke, and taking great gulps of tea. This apathy was really beginning to provoke us, when one of these worthy Chinese, getting up from his seat, came and laid his two hands on our shoulders in a manner quite paternal, and said, smiling rather ironically: 'Listen to me, my friend! Why should you trouble your heart and fatigue your head by all these vain surmises? The mandarins have to attend to affairs of state; they are paid for it. Let them earn their

money, then. But don't let us torment ourselves about what does not concern us. We should be great fools to want to do political business for nothing.' 'That is very conformable to reason,' cried the rest of the company; and thereupon they pointed out to us that our tea was getting cold and our pipes were out." [18]

Now it goes without saying that much of this indifference is the indifference of sheer ignorance or selfishness. Such a thing as an enlightened public spirit is a new thing and a rare thing in China, and the Chinese themselves will admit this.[19] Furthermore, it is of course true that much of this indifference arising from ignorance or selfishness is in part due to the lack of modern means of transportation and communication, to the want of a uniform language and other unifying agencies.[20] But over and above such considerations, the Chinese is in a certain sense inherently individualistic. Individualism is a difficult, if not imposible, word to define, for its meanings are truly legion. But Chinese individualism does not mean self-assertion and initiative. On the contrary, such qualities are notably lacking, particularly in that portion which has not yet been "modernized." Rather we mean by Chinese individualism an attitude of mind that shrinks from too much *governmental* organization, supervision, and regimentation. This statement is not to be taken

[18] *Chinese Characteristics,* pp. 112–113.

[19] Only three years ago the writer, while talking to some country people near the city of Shanghai, discovered that many of them did not yet know that the Manchu Dynasty had ceased ruling in the land of Han.

[20] All the many conditions which McDougall and other psychologists have mentioned as essential for the appearance of the sentiment of nationality being absent to a greater or less degree in China, one may wonder how it is that the country is held together at all. The answer, of course, is to be found in the pervasiveness of custom.

to mean that there is no regimentation at all. On the contrary, the universal sway of custom, the extent of use and wont that everywhere prevails and regulates life in China, affords a form of control which the Westerner finds it difficult to appreciate. Custom regimentation is a substitute for governmental regimentation, and in China, as in other ancient societies, the latter tends to vary in inverse ratio to the former. In China, if man is good, if he has *li,* if this *li* becomes identified with custom and the ways of the fathers, then government may safely leave to human nature's natural goodness and the provisions of *li* all care for order. Hence governmental regimentation seems to be superfluous, and there exists a deep-rooted antipathy to being too much governed. Too much government comes to be regarded as too much interference, and government by example and exhortation is deemed quite sufficient. It is hardly necessary to point out that the antipathy to control applies only to governmental oversight. It would be extravagant to say that, in a land where custom, tradition and the family play such an important part, there is an aversion to control in general. Yet this sort of control partakes so much of the character of blind routine that the individual normally is not conscious of its presence. Chinese individualism then consists simply in the feeling that government is good in proportion as it is superfluous, and this, we repeat, follows from the great underlying principle in Chinese ethical and social thought that man is by nature good.

An attempt has been made in the present chapter to sketch the general outlines of the Confucian political ideal by contrasting the spirit and standpoint of Confucian political thought with the spirit and standpoint of Western political philosophizing. We have seen that there are two dominant

notes of Confucian political thought. The first is a personal view of government resulting in a peculiar form of paternalism that is something more than a typical and transitory phenomenon of society everywhere in its early stages of development. It is actually something unique which calls for explanation. And we have sought, however inadequately, to provide an explanation of this phenomenon by linking it up with the doctrine of the natural goodness of human nature. As a vital theory of government such a paternalism will pass away. Any form of paternalistic government must be replaced by a different form of organization in proportion as intelligence is liberated and developed through free exercise. But the very difficulties of the change now being effected would seem to suggest that century-old attitudes and habits of thought will be transmuted but not completely obliterated; and that lingering traces of these will therefore remain as operative factors in the reorganization of Chinese social and political thought—a reorganization that is at present but little more than a vague and pious hope. The second note is the note of individualism which likewise derives from the doctrine of human nature's goodness. The individualism of the Chinese which expresses itself as a proverbial antipathy to excessive governmentation may be characterized as nonchalance and we have explained that it is not a phenomenon that owes its existence to the free exercise of reason. The individual as an entity capable of being thought of apart as a differential factor in Chinese society does not exist and cannot exist so long as Confucian archaism dominates men's thinking; so long as morality, no matter how much it may be extolled, is still in its prereflective stage and rests upon a fundamental and unquestioned assumption of the natural goodness of human nature; so long as the family is of

more importance than any of its members; in short, so long as custom and tradition everywhere control the course of men's lives. If, as we have pointed out, freedom from governmental superintendence and restraint was a desideratum, this was largely because there was elsewhere sufficient provision for the necessary regulation. Chinese individualism is indifferentism, and we find this individualism carried to its highest point in the thought of Lao Tzu, in the Canon of Reason and Virtue.

CHAPTER V

THE CANON OF REASON AND VIRTUE

The Tao Teh King or Canon of Reason and Virtue is usually ascribed to the philosopher Lao Tzu who is supposed to have been an elder contemporary of Confucius. The book is a short collection of laconic sentences which are commonly regarded as expressing primarily a mystical philosophy of life.

Authorities are by no means agreed as to the authenticity of the Tao Teh King. Professor Giles, for example, is of the opinion that Lao Tzu is not the author of the work. "It would be impossible," says he, "to regard it as the work of Lao Tzu, even if we could be sure that Lao Tzu flourished at that date. For a long list of critical reasons which cannot be reproduced here, it is practically certain that this book was pieced together, perhaps in the second century B. C. by a not too skilful forger. Sayings attributed to Lao Tzu were collected from all sources, and padded out with a supplementary text, which, when not unintelligible, is absurd. A small volume was thus produced, which, although it has not prevailed against the wit of native critics, has been quite a happy hunting-ground for the foreign student, ambitious to translate a Chinese text. Thus, it has been rendered many times into English and other European languages, with one uniform result. No two translators have ever agreed as to

its meaning."[1] On the other hand, Dr. Paul Carus writes: "As to the authenticity of the Tao Teh King and the historical reality of Lao-Tze's life, there can be no doubt."[2] And Legge remarks: "I do not know of any other book of so ancient a date as the Tao Teh King of which the authenticity of the origin and the genuineness of the text can claim to be so well substantiated."[3]

Such absence of unanimity amongst sinologists, while unfortunate, does not in any way detract from the importance of the Tao Teh King as an exponent of Chinese political thought. Whether or not the details of Lao Tzu's life are mere pious legends and whether or not the sayings attributed to the "Old Philosopher" were actually his utterances, nevertheless it remains true that the Tao Teh King is a collection of brief and often cryptic sentences that reflect in a peculiar degree the leading features of Chinese political thought already mentioned, viz., the cardinal doctrine of the goodness of man's original nature and the individualistic aversion to governmental superintendence. For this reason we have decided to include certain passages from the Tao Teh King in the text of Part Two.

As we have said, it is customary to contrast the thought of Confucius with that of Lao Tzu, and indeed there is ample warrant for doing so.[4] Yet the opposition is not so great that there are not important resemblances between the two philosophers, and it will be our aim to indicate these resemblances.

The historian Sze Ma-Chien, the Herodotus of Chinese

[1] *Confucianism and Its Rivals* (Hibbert Lectures, 1914), p. 147.
[2] Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh King* (Chinese-English), Introduction, p. 6.
[3] *Sacred Books of the East.* Vol. XXXIX, p. 9.
[4] See Introduction.

history, has brought out the contrast between Confucius and Lao Tzu in his extremely terse account of the life of Lao Tzu in the Shi-Ki (Historical Records) which we may reproduce. "Lao-Tze was born in the hamlet Chu-Jhren (Good Man's Bend), Li-Hsiang (Grinding County), Ku-Hien (Thistle District), of Chu (Bramble Land). His family was the Li gentry (Li meaning Plum). His proper name was Er (Ear), his posthumous title Po-Yang (Prince Positive), his appellation Tan (Long-lobed). In Cho he was in charge of the secret archives as state historian. Confucius went to Cho in order to consult Lao-Tze on the rules of propriety. (When Confucius, speaking of propriety, praised reverence for the sages of antiquity), Lao-Tze said: 'The men of whom you speak, Sir, have, if you please, together with their bones, mouldered. Their words alone are still extant. If a noble man finds his time he rises, but if he does not find his time he drifts like a roving-plant and wanders about. I observe that the wise merchant hides his treasures as if he were poor. The noble man of perfect virtue assumes an attitude as though he were stupid. Let go, Sir, your proud airs, your many wishes, your affectation and exaggerated plans. All this is of no use to you, Sir. That is what I have to communicate to you, and that is all.'

"Confucius left. (Unable to understand the basic idea of Lao-Tze's ethics), he addressed his disciples, saying: 'I know that the birds can fly, I know that the fishes can swim, I know that the wild animals can run. For the running one could make nooses; for the swimming, one could make nets; for the flying, one could make arrows. As to the dragon I cannot know how he can bestride wind and clouds when he heavenward rises. To-day I saw Lao-Tze. Is he perhaps like the dragon?'

"Lao-Tze practised reason and virtue. His doctrine aims in self-concealment and namelessness.

"Lao-Tze resided in Cho most of his life. When he foresaw the decay of Cho, he departed and came to the frontier. The custom house officer, Yin-Hi, said: 'Sir, since it pleases you to retire, I request you for my sake to write a book.'

"Thereupon Lao-Tze wrote a book of two parts consisting of five thousand and odd words, in which he discussed the concepts of reason and virtue. Then he departed.

"No one knows where he died." [5]

The followers of Lao Tzu, particularly his chief disciple Chuang Tzu, who was a contemporary of Mencius, report other meetings between Confucius and Lao Tzu. In all of these meetings Confucius is represented as putting forward views which Lao Tzu denounces and refutes. Chuang Tzu was trying to substitute Lao Tzu as the spiritual guide of the Chinese people for Confucius whose teachings Mencius was organizing and propagating. Naturally, for controversial purposes, points of dissimilarity would therefore be stressed and the similarities would be either ignored or passed over. One of these imaginary conversations may, however, be recited in order to bring out more clearly the fundamental position of Lao Tzu.

On a certain occasion Lao Tzu is said to have seen Confucius engaged in study and asked what he was reading. "The Yih-King (The Book of Changes)," replied Confucius; "the sages of antiquity used to read it also." "The sages were able to read it," said Lao Tzu; "but you, to what end do you read it? What is the groundwork of the book?" "It treats of humanity and justice," answered Confucius. "The justice and humanity of the day are no more than empty

[5] From Carus' translation of *Tao Teh King*, pp. 95–96.

names; they only serve as a mask to cruelty, and trouble the hearts of men; disorder was never more rife than at present. The pigeon does not bathe all day to make itself white; nor does the crow paint itself each morning to make itself black. The heaven is naturally elevated, the earth is naturally gross; the sun and moon shine naturally; the stars and planets are naturally arranged in their places; the plants and trees fall naturally into classes, according to their species. So, Sir, if you cultivate Tao, if you throw yourself towards it with all your soul, you will arrive at it. To what good is humanity and justice? You are like a man who beats a drum while searching for a truant sheep. Master, you only trouble man's nature." [6]

We have said that the Tao Teh King contains the outline of a philosophy of mysticism. The Tao of Lao Tzu, which is usually translated "way" or "reason," has indeed a multitude of meanings. But the doctrine of the Tao is a doctrine of the divine immanence, the presence of the Infinite in the finite, of the Absolute in the conditional, and, as such, is a mystical doctrine. Mysticism, it has been remarked, has no birthday and no native land or language. As a system of mysticism, therefore, Taoism exhibits all the general features of such a philosophy whenever and wherever it is found. And with this aspect of Taoism we are not here chiefly concerned. It is necessary to observe, however, that Lao Tzu built into the structure of his mystical theory of the universe very definite views as to the constitution of man and very explicit ideas as to the most appropriate sort of social life for man. To such an extent is this the case that Professor Douglas has contended that the Tao Teh King is primarily

[6] Julien, Introduction to *Le Livre de la Voie et de la Vertu.* Quoted by Douglas, *Confucianism and Taoism*, pp. 182–183.

a politico-ethical system having the same remedial purpose as the Analects of Confucius. We do most unquestionably see in Lao Tzu the same yearning desire for social and political improvement, the same ardent longing to reform the empire through introducing the reign of goodness, the same faith in the natural goodness of the human heart. It is repeatedly laid down in the Confucian tradition which has been discussed in the previous pages that a truly virtuous sovereign who is served by virtuous ministers will, by the mere force of his example, produce an effect on his people which neither the enactment of laws nor the infliction of punishment will be able to accomplish. And here Lao Tzu is at one with Confucius.

But Lao Tzu disagrees with Confucius in that he regards the latter's method as not only ineffective but actually prejudicial to evoking that natural goodness of man which is the desideratum of both reformers. The former thought that he saw Confucian emphasis upon the rules of propriety (*li*) leading to literalism, formalism, empty ceremonialism, and even hypocrisy. He protested against any system that might possibly make men mistake the shadow for the substance of virtue through placing too much emphasis upon decorum and not enough upon inward sincerity. And, as we have pointed out, it was against the weaker points in Confucianism that the followers of Lao Tzu directed their attack. Confucianism seemed to them to be a cumbersome system of meticulous requirements in the shape of archaic rules which those in authority spent their time noisily prating about as essential for the peace and prosperity of the people. If, as has been suggested, there was indifferentism to governmental control in the Confucian tradition, there is actual hostility to any sort of control, customary or otherwise, in the school of Lao

Tzu. As Douglas puts it, "it was by gentle suasion that he would govern the empire and recall men from the sway of the fierce passions which had been aroused by primitive jealousies, base tyrannies and unruly violence to a state of primitive simplicity when the great Tao was the rule of life and before philanthropy and justice had acquired new names; when perfect concord ruled in families and before filial piety and fatherly compassion began; when the state was perfectly ordered and before patriots were known." [r] "Abandon your saintliness," exclaims Lao Tzu, "put away your prudence; and the people will gain a hundredfold! Abandon your benevolence; put away your justice; and the people will return to filial devotion and paternal love! Abandon your scheming; put away your gains; and thieves and robbers will no longer exist." Hence the celebrated saying of Lao Tzu, "Requite evil with goodness," which has been contrasted with Confucius' injunction to recompense kindness with kindness and evil with justice. Those who see in Lao Tzu's saying a foreshadowing of the Christian teaching with respect to the proper attitude toward enemies fail to see the utilitarian aspect of Lao Tzu's advice. Lao Tzu thinks that his method will "work" better than the method of Confucius. It is not that Confucius does not trust human nature. It is that, according to Lao Tzu, he does not trust it enough. The remedies of Confucius may afford temporary relief at best and will not cure the social disease. Confucius is only smothering man's natural goodness with a heavy mantle of superfluous maxims, so that the ailments of society bid fair to become festering sores. Lao Tzu is for a treatment that will at once abolish all the Confucian artificialities that turn out to

[r] Op. cit., p. 193.

be just so many human impediments to the course of virtue, and lead to a return to the life of nature.

In this advocacy of a return to nature one is reminded of the same programme of more recent philosophers. Lao Tzu, we may say, would have endorsed with complete approval the sentiments of the author of *Emile* that "everything is good as it comes from the hand of nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man." In every age when society has seemed to be hopelessly complex, and when injustice and oppression, luxury, extravagance and attachment to material things are too prevalent, there will be voices crying in the wilderness; they will attribute all such evils to the impertinent interference of human hands with the free exercise of the benevolent instincts of nature and will summon men back to a life of Arcadian simplicity which is then idealized as the only true life for man. In the life of the "noble savage" of Rousseau or even in the Golden Age which Homer looked back upon with a wistful gaze, as well as in the primitive state of man that the Chinese philosopher extolled, we witness the same tendency at work that sees society's salvation in a release from human intricacies. The reign of virtue is best secured through reverting to the simpler modes of life of an earlier period before civilization had placed all its obstacles in the path of goodness.

The quality which most impressed Lao Tzu in the orderly operations of nature (and one of the meanings of Tao is the course of nature), was that they are accomplished without effort or seeming purpose. "Heaven does not strive and yet it overcomes." Accordingly the life of virtue as conformity with Tao must exhibit the same spontaneity. This is the celebrated Taoist doctrine of *Wu Wei,* inactivity or non-

assertion. "Tao" (or Nature) "practices non-assertion." Virtue is acquired not through frenzied strivings to follow rules and forms. This would be a case of *"parturiunt montes, ridiculus mus nascitur."* Virtue is not an achievement. It is rather a passive condition which naturally supervenes when men without disturbance yield up the guidance of their lives to Tao.

The vanity of human effort, which is one of the dominant notes in the philosophy of Lao Tzu, is the main theme of the disciple Chuang Tzu. The fussy politician who boasts of having governed the empire is given to understand that the empire would have been very much better governed if it had been left alone, and the man who seeks to establish a reputation is told that reputation is but the "guest of reality." "The tailor bird builds its nest in the deep forest, but only on one bough; the field mouse drinks from the river, but only enough to satisfy his thirst." Such are the examples which should be followed by man. . . . If the world were but left to itself, people would wear that which they spun and eat that which they grew. The mountains would be without paths, and the waters without ships. All created things would rejoice in life. Wild animals would wander in troops, and trees and shrubs would flourish, among which birds and beasts might roam. Then men would enjoy a golden age. No knowledge would separate them from virtue and no desires would taint their purity. But what is the state of things now? Sages turn round and round and become benevolent and kick and struggle to become righteous and people suspect them. . . . If the natural disposition had not been departed from, what use would there have been for ceremonies . . . ?[8]

[8] Douglas, op. cit., pp. 231–232.

Lao Tzu observed epigrammatically that those who govern the people should govern as one would cook small fish, that is, not gut or scale them or make other elaborate culinary preparations. And the great danger in frying small fish is that they may be overdone. *Pas trop gouverner* may thus be taken as the motto of Taoism as a politico-ethical system. Chuang Tzu, to whom we may refer once more, expresses the same idea in a kind of parable which will serve as a convenient summary and conclusion. "One day Lo Po appeared, saying: 'I understand the management of horses.' So he branded them and clipped them, tying them up by the head and shackling them by the feet, and disposing them in stables, with the result that two or three out of every ten died. Then he kept them hungry and thirsty, trotting them and galloping them, and grooming and trimming, with the misery of the tasselled bridle before and the fear of the knotted whip behind until more than half of them were dead.

"The potter says: 'I can do what I will with clay. If I want it round, I use compasses; if rectangular, a square.'

"The carpenter says: 'I can do what I want with wood. If I want it curved, I use an arc; if straight, a line.'

"But on what grounds can we think that the natures of clay and wood desire this application of compasses and square, of arc and line? Nevertheless, every age extols Lo Po for his skill in managing horses, and potters and carpenters for their skill in dealing with clay and wood. Those who govern the empire make the same mistake." [9]

Hence we return to our thesis that the two cardinal principles of Chinese political thought are the belief in the inherent goodness of man's natural disposition and the undesirability of governmental regimentation. These beliefs are convictions deeply embedded in the Chinese tradition.

They are what make Confucius and Lao Tzu brothers under the skin; and they are factors to be continually reckoned with in the attempts of those who would guide the people of China through their present paroxysms of readjustment as well as in the efforts of those at a distance who would understand the slowness of the process.

[9] *Nan Hwa King.* Quoted in *The Musings of a Chinese Mystic* (Wisdom of the East Series).

PART TWO

SECTION I

SELECTIONS FROM THE FOUR BOOKS[1]

(1)

"He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place, and all the stars turn towards it." (Anal.)

(2)

"When those who are in high stations perform well all their duties to their relations, the people are aroused to virtue. When old friends are not neglected by them, the people are preserved from meanness." (Anal.)

(3)

Tsze-kung asked about government. The Master said, "The requisites of government are, that there be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their rulers."

Tsze-Kung said, "If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?" "The military equipment," said the Master.

Tsze-Kung again asked, "If it cannot be helped, and one of the remaining two must be dispensed with, which of them should be foregone?" The Master answered, "Part with the food.

[1] The following abbreviations are used: Anal. = *Analects;* G. L. = *Great Learning;* D. M. = *Doctrine of the Mean;* B. M. = *Book of Mencius.*

From of old, death has been the lot of all men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers, there is no standing for the state." (Anal.)

(4)

Tsze-chang asked about government. The Master said, "The art of governing is to keep its affairs before the mind without weariness, and to practise them with undeviating consistency."

Ke K'ang asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?" (Anal.)

(5)

Ke K'ang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it." (Anal.)

(6)

Tsze-loo asked about government. The Master said, "Go before the people with your example, and be laborious in their affairs."

"Be not weary in these things."

"Employ first the services of your various officers, pardon small faults, and raise to office men of virtue and talents."

Chung-Kung said, "How shall I know the men of virtue and talents, so that I may raise them to office?" He was answered, "Raise to office those whom you know. As to those whom you do not know, will others neglect them?"

"If a superior love propriety, the people will not dare not to be reverent. If he love righteousness, the people will not dare not to submit to his example. If he love good faith, the people will not dare not to be sincere. Now, when these things

obtain, the people from all quarters will come to him, bearing their children on their backs."

"Though a man may be able to recite the three hundred odes, yet if, when intrusted with a governmental charge, he knows not how to act, or if, when sent to any quarter on a mission, he cannot give his replies unassisted, notwithstanding the extent of his learning, of what practical use is it?"

"When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed." (Anal.)

(7)

"'If good men were to govern a country in succession for a hundred years, they would be able to transform the violently bad, and dispense with capital punishments.' True, indeed, is this saying!"

"If a minister make his own conduct correct, what difficulty will he have in assisting in government? If he cannot rectify himself, what has he to do with rectifying others?" (Anal.)

(8)

The duke of She asked about government.

The Master said, "Good government obtains, when those who are near are made happy, and those who are far off are attracted." (Anal.)

(9)

Heen asked what was shameful. The Master said, "When good government prevails in a state, to be thinking only of his salary; and, when bad government prevails, to be thinking, in the same way, only of his salary: this is shameful." (Anal.)

(10)

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own states.

Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first thought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

From the emperor down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered. It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and at the same time that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.

What is meant by "In order rightly to govern his state, it is necessary first to regulate his family," is this: It is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore the ruler, without going beyond his family, completes the lessons for the state. There is filial piety; therewith the sovereign should be served. There is fraternal submission; therewith elders and superiors should be served. There is kindness; therewith the multitude should be treated.

Yaou and Shun led on the empire with benevolence, and the people followed them. Kee and Chow led on the empire with violence, and the people followed them. The orders which these issued were contrary to the practices which they loved, and so the people did not follow them. On this account, the ruler must himself be possessed of the good qualities, and then

he may require them in the people. He must not have the bad qualities in himself, and then he may require that they shall not be in the people. Never has there been a man, who, not having reference to his own character and wishes in dealing with others, was able effectually to instruct them.

Thus we see how the government of the state depends on the regulation of the family.

In the Book of Poetry, it is said, "In his deportment there is nothing wrong; he rectifies all the people of the state." Yes; when the ruler, as a father, a son, and a brother, is a model, then the people imitate him. (G.L.)

(11)

What the ruler would have his people do, he must do himself; what he would have them be, he must be himself. (G.L.)

(12)

What is meant by "The making the whole empire peaceful and happy depends on the government of his state," is this: When the sovereign behaves to his aged, as the aged should be behaved to, the people become filial; when the sovereign behaves to his elders, as elders should be behaved to, the people learn brotherly submission; when the sovereign treats compassionately the young and helpless, the people do the same. Thus the ruler has a principle with which, as with a measuring square, he may regulate his conduct. (G.L.)

(13)

What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates in those who are before him, let him not therewith precede those who are behind him; what he hates in those who are behind him, let him not therewith follow those who are before him; what he hates to receive on the right, let him not bestow on the left; what he hates to receive on the left, let

him not bestow on the right: this is what is called "The principle with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct."

In the Book of Poetry, it is said, "How much to be rejoiced in are these princes, the parents of the people!" When a prince loves what the people love, and hates what the people hate, then is he what is called the parent of the people.

Never has there been a case of the sovereign loving benevolence, and the people not loving righteousness. Never has there been a case where the people have loved righteousness, and the affairs of the sovereign have not been carried to completion. And never has there been a case where the wealth in such a state, collected in the treasuries and arsenals, did not continue in the sovereign's possession. (G.L.)

(14)

The ruler will first take pains about his own virtue. Possessing virtue will give him the people. Possessing the people will give him the territory. Possessing the territory will give him its wealth. Possessing the wealth, he will have resources for expenditure.

Virtue is the root; wealth is the result.

If he make the root his secondary object, and the result his primary, he will only wrangle with his people, and teach them rapine.

Hence, the accumulation of wealth is the way to scatter the people; and the letting it be scattered among them is the way to collect the people.

And hence, the ruler's words going forth contrary to right, will come back to him in the same way, and wealth gotten by improper ways will take its departure by the same. (G.L.)

(15)

The virtuous ruler, by means of his wealth, makes himself more distinguished. The vicious ruler accumulates wealth at the expense of his life.

When he who presides over a state or a family makes his revenues his chief business, he must be under the influence of some small, mean man. He may consider this man to be good; but when such a person is employed in the administration of a state or family, calamities from Heaven and injuries from men will befall it together, and though a good man may take his place, he will not be able to remedy the evil. This illustrates again the saying, "In a state, gain is not to be considered prosperity, but its prosperity will be found in righteousness." (G.L.)

(16)

"All who have the government of the empire with its states and families, have nine standard rules to follow, viz: the cultivation of their own characters; the honoring of men of virtue and talents; affection toward their relatives; respect toward the great ministers; kind and considerate treatment of the whole body of officers; dealing with the mass of the people as children; encouraging the resort of all classes of artisans; indulgent treatment of men from a distance; and the kindly cherishing of the princes of the state.

"By the ruler's cultivation of his own character, the duties of universal obligation are set forth. By honoring men of virtue and talents, he is preserved from errors of judgment. By showing affection to his relatives, there is no grumbling nor resentment among his uncles and brethren. By respecting the great ministers, he is kept from errors in the practice of government. By kind and considerate treatment of the whole body of officers, they are led to make the most grateful return for his courtesies. By dealing with the mass of the people as his children, they are led to exhort one another to what is good. By encouraging the resort of all classes of artisans, his resources for expenditure are rendered ample. By indulgent treatment of men from a distance, they are brought to resort to him from all quarters. And by kindly cherishing the princes of the state, the whole empire is brought to revere him. (D.M.)

(17)

"In the Book of History it is said, 'Heaven having produced the inferior people, appointed for them rulers and teachers, with the purpose that they should be assisting to God, and therefore distinguished them throughout the four quarters of the empire; How dare any under heaven give indulgence to their refractory wills?' It is said in the Book of Poetry,

"'Under the whole heaven,
Every spot is the sovereign's ground;
To the borders of the land,
Every individual is the sovereign's minister!'"

Wan Chang said, "Was it the case that Yaou gave the empire to Shun?" Mencius said, "No. The emperor cannot give the empire to another."

"Yes; but Shun had the empire. Who gave it to him?" "Heaven gave it to him," was the answer.

"'Heaven gave it to him!' did Heaven confer its appointment on him with specific injunctions?"

Mencius replied, "No. Heaven does not speak. It simply showed its will by his personal conduct, and his conduct of affairs."

"'It showed its will by his personal conduct, and his conduct of affairs'; how was this?" Mencius' answer was, "The emperor can present a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give that man the empire. A prince can present a man to the emperor, but he cannot cause the emperor to make that man a prince. A great officer can present a man to his prince, but he cannot cause the prince to make that man a great officer. Yaou presented Shun to Heaven, and the people accepted him. Therefore I say, 'Heaven does not speak. It simply indicated its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs.'" (B.M.)

(18)

"If your Majesty will institute a government whose actions shall all be benevolent, this will cause all the officers in the empire to wish to stand in your Majesty's court, and the farm-

ers all to wish to plough in your Majesty's fields, and the merchants, both travelling and stationary, all to wish to store their goods in your Majesty's market-places, and travelling strangers all to wish to make their tours on your Majesty's roads, and all throughout the empire who feel aggrieved by their rulers to wish to come and complain to your Majesty. And when they are so bent, who will be able to keep them back?"

The king said, "I am stupid, and not able to advance to this. I wish you, my Master, to assist my intentions. Teach me clearly; although I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will essay and try to carry your instructions into effect.

"From the want of benevolence and the want of wisdom will ensue the entire absence of propriety and righteousness: he who is in such a case must be the servant of other men.

"The man who would be benevolent is like the archer. The archer adjusts himself, and then shoots. If he misses, he does not murmur against those who surpass himself. He simply turns round and seeks the cause of his failure in himself." (B.M.)

(19)

"The path of duty lies in what is near, and men seek for it in what is remote. The work of duty lies in what is easy, and men seek for it in what is difficult. If each man would love his parents, and show the due respect to his elders, the whole empire would enjoy tranquillity. (B.M.)

(20)

Mencius said, "He who outrages the benevolence proper to his nature is called a robber; he who outrages righteousness is called a ruffian. The robber and ruffian we call a mere fellow. I have heard of the cutting off of the fellow Chow, but I have not heard of the putting a sovereign to death, in his case."

Mencius said, "In calamitous years and years of famine, the old and weak of your people, who have been found lying in the ditches and water-channels, and the able-bodied who have been scattered about to the four quarters, have amounted to

several thousands. All the while, your granaries, O prince, have been stored with grain, and your treasuries and arsenals have been full, and not one of your officers has told you of the distress. Thus negligent have the superiors in your state been, and cruel to their inferiors. The philosopher Tsang said, 'Beware, beware! What proceeds from you will return to you again.' Now, at length, the people have returned their conduct to the officers. Do not you, O prince, blame them.

"If you will put in practice a benevolent government, this people will love you and all above them, and will die for their officers."

Mencius said, "Kee and Chow's losing the empire arose from their losing the people, and to lose the people means to lose their hearts. There is a way to get the empire: get the people and the empire is got. There is a way to get the people: get their hearts, and the people are got. There is a way to get their hearts: it is simply to collect for them what they like, and not to lay on them what they dislike.

"The people turn to a benevolent rule as water flows downwards." (B.M.)

(21)

Mencius said, "Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated: do this, and the empire may be made to go round in your palm. It is said in the Book of Poetry, 'His example affected his wife. It reached to his brothers, and his family of the state was governed by it.' The language shows how King Wan simply took his kindly heart, and exercised it toward those parties. Therefore the carrying out his kindly heart by a prince will suffice for the love and protection of all within the four seas, and if he do not carry it out, he will not be able to protect his wife and children. The way in which the ancients came greatly to surpass other men, was no other than this: simply

that they knew well how to carry out, so as to affect others, what they themselves did. Now your kindness is sufficient to reach to animals, and no benefits are extended from it to reach the people. How is this? Is an exception to be made here?

"If the sovereign be benevolent, all will be benevolent. If the sovereign be righteous, all will be righteous." (B.M.)

(22)

Mencius said, "People have this common saying, 'The empire, the state, the family.' The root of the empire is the state. The root of the state is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its head." (B.M.)

(23)

"Let the prince be benevolent, and all his acts will be benevolent.

"Let the prince be righteous, and all his acts will be righteous. Let the prince be correct, and everything will be correct. Once rectify the prince, and the kingdom will be firmly settled.

"There are those who are great men. They rectify themselves, and others are rectified.

"If a man himself do not walk in the right path, it will not be walked in even by his wife and children. If he do not order men according to the right way, he will not be able to get the obedience of even his wife and children." (B.M.)

(24)

He who with a great state serves a small one, delights in Heaven. He who with a small state serves a large one, stands in awe of Heaven. He who delights in Heaven will affect with his love and protection the whole empire. He who stands in awe of Heaven will affect with his love and protection his own kingdom. It is said in the Book of Poetry, "I fear the majesty of Heaven, and will thus preserve its favouring decree." (B.M.)

(25)

If you do good among your descendants, in after generations, there shall be one who will attain to the Imperial dignity. (B.M.)

(26)

Confucius said, "The flowing progress of virtue is more rapid than the transmission of imperial orders by stages and couriers." (B.M.)

SECTION II

SELECTIONS FROM LAO TZU'S CANON OF REASON AND VIRTUE

(1)

Not exalting worth keeps people from rivalry. Not prizing what is difficult to obtain keeps people from committing theft. Not contemplating what kindles desire keeps the heart unconfused. Therefore the holy man when he governs empties the people's hearts but fills their souls. He weakens their ambitions but strengthens their backbones. Always he keeps the people unsophisticated and without desire. He causes that the crafty do not dare to act. When he acts with non-assertion there is nothing ungoverned.

(2)

Superior goodness resembleth water. Water in goodness benefiteth the ten thousand things, yet it quarreleth not. Because it dwells in places which the multitude of men shun, therefore it is near unto the eternal Reason.

For a dwelling goodness chooses the level. For a heart goodness chooses commotion. When giving, goodness chooses benevolence. In words, goodness chooses faith. In government goodness chooses order. In business goodness chooses ability. In its motion goodness chooses timeliness. It quarreleth not. Therefore, it is not rebuked.

(3)

He who sustains and disciplines his soul and embraces unity cannot be deranged. Through attention to his vitality and inducing tenderness he can become like a little child. By purify-

ing, by cleansing and profound intuition he can be free from faults.

In loving the people and administering the country he can practise non-assertion. Opening and closing the gates of heaven he can be like a mother-bird: bright, and white, and penetrating the four quarters, he can be unsophisticated. He quickens them and feeds them. He quickens but owns not. He acts but claims not. He excels but rules not. This is called profound virtue.

(4)

Where great sages are (in power), the subjects do not notice their existence. Where there are lesser sages, the people are attached to them; they praise them. Where still lesser ones are, the people fear them; and where still lesser ones are, the people despise them. For it is said:

"If your faith be insufficient, verily, you will receive no faith."

How reluctantly sages consider their words! Merit they accomplish; deeds they perform; and the hundred families think: "We are independent; we are free."

(5)

When the great Reason is obliterated, we have benevolence and justice. Prudence and circumspection appear, and we have much hypocrisy. When family relations no longer harmonise, we have filial piety and paternal love. When the country and the clans decay through disorder, we have loyalty and allegiance.

(6)

Abandon your saintliness; put away your prudence; and the people will gain a hundredfold!

Abandon your benevolence; put away your justice; and the people will return to filial devotion and paternal love!

Abandon your scheming; put away your gains; and thieves and robbers will no longer exist.

These are the three things for which we deem culture insufficient. Therefore it is said:

"Hold fast to that which will endure,
Show thyself simple, preserve thee pure,
Thy own keep small, thy desires poor."

(7)

He who with Reason assists the master of mankind will not with arms conquer the empire. His methods (are such as) invite requital.

Where armies are quartered briars and thorns grow. Great wars unfailingly are followed by famines. A good man acts resolutely and then stops. He ventures not to take by force. He is resolute but not boastful; resolute but not haughty; resolute but not arrogant; resolute because he cannot avoid it; resolute but not violent.

Things thrive and then grow old. This is called un-Reason. Un-Reason soon ceases.

(8)

Reason always practises non-assertion, and there is nothing that remains undone.

If princes and kings could keep Reason, the ten thousand things would of themselves be reformed. While being reformed they would yet be anxious to stir; but I would restrain them by the simplicity of the Ineffable.

"The simplicity of the unexpressed
Will purify the heart of lust.
Where there's no lust there will be rest,
And all the world will thus be blest."

Superior virtue is un-virtue. Therefore it has virtue. Inferior virtue never loses sight of virtue. Therefore it has no virtue. Superior virtue is non-assertion and without pretension. Inferior virtue asserts and makes pretensions.

Superior benevolence acts but makes no pretensions.

Superior justice acts and makes pretensions. The superior propriety acts and when no one responds to it, it stretches its arms and enforces its rules. Thus one loses Reason and then virtue appears. One loses benevolence and then justice appears. One loses justice and then propriety appears. The rules of propriety are the semblance of loyalty and faith, and the beginning of disorder.

(9)

With rectitude one governs the state; with craftiness one leads the army; with non-diplomacy one takes the empire. How do I know that it is so? Through Reason.

The more restrictions and prohibitions are in the empire, the poorer grow the people. The more weapons the people have, the more troubled is the state. The more there is cunning and skill, the more startling events will happen. The more mandates and laws are enacted, the more there will be thieves and robbers.

Therefore the holy man says: I practise non-assertion, and the people of themselves reform. I love quietude, and the people of themselves become righteous. I use no diplomacy, and the people of themselves become rich. I have no desire, and the people of themselves remain simple.

(10)

In governing the people and in attending to heaven there is nothing like moderation. As to moderation, it is said that it must be an early habit. If it is an early habit, it will be richly accumulated virtue. If one has richly accumulated virtue, then there is nothing that cannot be overcome. If there is nothing that cannot be overcome, then no one knows his limits. If no one knows his limits, one can possess the country. If one possesses the mother of the country (viz., moderation), one can thereby last long. This is called having deep roots and a firm stem. To long life and lasting comprehension this is the Way.

Govern a great country as you would fry small fish: (neither gut nor scale them).

(11)

A great state, one that lowly flows, becomes the empire's union, and the empire's wife. The wife always through quietude conquers her husband, and by quietude renders herself lowly. Thus a great state through lowliness toward small states will conquer the small states, and small states through lowliness toward great states will conquer great states.

Therefore some render themselves lowly for the purpose of conquering; others are lowly and therefore conquer.

A great state desires no more than to unite and feed the people; a small state desires no more than to devote itself to the service of the people; but that both may obtain their wishes, the greater one must stoop.

(12)

The ancients who were well versed in Reason did not thereby enlighten the people; they intended thereby to make them simple-hearted.

If people are difficult to govern, it is because they are too smart. To govern the country with smartness is the country's curse. To govern the country without smartness is the country's blessing. He who knows these two things is also a model (like the ancients). Always to know them is called profound virtue.

Profound virtue, verily, is deep. Verily, it is far-reaching. Verily, it is to everything reverse. But then it will procure great recognition.

(13)

The people hunger because their superiors consume too many taxes; therefore they hunger. The people are difficult to govern because their superiors are too meddlesome; therefore it is difficult to govern. The people make light of death on account of the intensity of their clinging to life; therefore they make light of death.

He who is not bent on life is worthier than he who esteems life.

(14)

Induce people to return to (the old custom of) knotted cords and to use them (in the place of writing), to delight in their food, to be proud of their clothes, to be content with their homes, and to rejoice in their customs; then in a neighboring state within sight, the voices of the cocks and dogs would be within hearing, yet the people might grow old and die before they visited one another.

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